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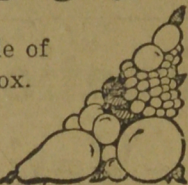
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PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE VALLEY RAILWAY WAS DISCUSSED IN HOUSE

(From Hansard)

On motion of Hon. Geo. P. Graham (Minister of Railways) the House went into committee on Bill No. 234 respecting the construction of Canadian National railway lines, Mr. Macil (Bonaventure) in the chair.

Mr. Hanson: I want information with respect to one of the branches which it is proposed to build under this legislation, as it happens to lie wholly within the constituency I have the honour to represent. I am referring to Meductic, New Brunswick, westerly to the international boundary. The Minister, of course, is aware that the government today does not own the railway extending up and down the St. John Valley, of which this would be a branch but operates it under a contract with the St. John and Quebec Railway Company the stock of which is owned by the provincial government. This, as no doubt the minister is also aware, is not by any means a new scheme, but was originated when the government railways were being operated by Mr. Gutelius; and it was intended to give the railway lines in New Brunswick an independent outlet to the United States, making them independent of the Canadian Pacific Railway to which company all the traffic originating on the government lines in the province of New Brunswick and destined for New England points is at the present time handed over. The arrangement has been commended by railway men of experience who have looked into it. But I want to point out that there are certain considerations which the government, in providing the money for the construction of the line, and the management of the Canadian National Railways in putting their seal of approbation on the project, should bear very positively in mind. The first consideration to which I allude is this, that this line should not be built until it is determined with definiteness, and after the very greatest possible care has been exercised, as to who is to build the extension to the boundary line between New Brunswick and the Maine Central railway. And one question I desire to ask now is, with what connection is this branch line to be yoked up? What railway company, what body of men, are building from the boundary to the Maine Central connection, which I understand is to be some miles east of Vanceboro? If it is to be the company known as the Eastern Maine Railway Company I want to ask the minister to have a care before making any arrangement or entering into any contract with that company. While I would be the last one to do any injury to any promotion of that character in the State of Maine, I have very considerable doubt as to the ability of that company actually to build its lines. I do not think that this branch line should be undertaken until the Canadian National Railway directorate is assured not only of the bona fides but of the financial ability of the parties to build the connecting link that will be necessary. I have heard it rumored within the last few weeks that the government itself is to build the part that is to lie within the state of Maine. I cannot credit that rumour because no provision has been made here for such work, and in fact I do not think it would be a very good policy. But there are a few other considerations to which I would call the attention of the minister. If the Canadian National Railways are to build the connect-

ing link on this side—and I believe that in the end it will be good business—there are two other things that should be taken into account. First, they should extend the St. John and Quebec Railway to Grand Falls on the Transcontinental as originally contemplated, in order that it may get the business originating in northern New Brunswick; and, in the second place, it should rebuild the railway bridge of Fredericton which was built by the late Senator Temple, the promoter and owner of the Canada Eastern Railway now part of the government railway system and which is wholly inadequate to bear the traffic of modern locomotives. These two things seem desirable. Another question which I wish to ask the minister is of much importance. Is it contemplated that the work shall be started this year, or is it to be held over until the eve of the next general election? I am very much interested in that question personally, as the minister can very well understand. I will tell him now that it will not get him any votes to hold the matter over another year, while it might get him votes if he started it now. I want him to be sure also that the Maine connection is a bona fide one.

An Important Question

Mr. Graham: The last question in regard to the election is important.

Mr. Hanson: It is important to me personally.

Mr. Graham: The government has no desire, nor has the Canadian National board, to use any of the lines at the time of construction for political purposes. There is nothing of the kind in my mind, because if I were undertaking any of this work for political purposes I would build lines in other places before I would do anything in some of these districts.

Mr. Hanson: What about the Hudson Bay?

Mr. Graham: It is not contemplated to do much work this year. We shall do the surveys and twenty-five miles of grading.

Mr. Hanson: Only the surveys this year?

Mr. Graham: That is about all you can do this year the season being far gone already. With regard to the question of my hon. friend concerning the connecting up of the railway with the United States, this branch on the Canadian side is to be constructed only on the distinct undertaking that the line on the other side will be built to meet it, and I think I can tell my hon. friend that the work will not be begun until such time as the Canadian National board has assurance that those who take up the work will be financially in a position to carry it through.

Mr. Hanson: Has the minister information as to who is to build the American end of this line, or is there any definite proposition before the management with regard to it?

Mr. Graham: Not at the present time.

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