

AFTER RECESS,

Mr. BLAKE said he did not understand the Bill to be presented to the House in pursuance of a policy on the part of the Dominion Government to construct a railway from Esquimaux to Nanaimo if their hands were free ; but he understood it to be brought down in order to give effect to an engagement which had been made with British Columbia, through the medium of the Colonial Secretary, with respect to certain terms of relaxation of the original bargain agreed upon at the time of union with that Province, and one of those terms of engagement, which the House was asked by passing this Bill implicitly to ratify, was, that there shall be constructed immediately or forthwith a railway from Esquimaux to Nanaimo. His hon. friend the First Minister had explained that it was because that was the term of the engagement with British Columbia that he asked authority to enter into the contracts for the construction of that railway, and to proceed upon those contracts without obtaining the assent of Parliament thereto, or rather without giving Parliament an opportunity of disapproving of the contracts. Those who were prepared to assent to and to implement those engagements could hardly consistently object to that proposal, simply because it was essential to the complete fulfilment of the engagement. If they were to wait till next session of Parliament before work was commenced, that meant to wait, of course, a whole year, till the next season for work, and that would not be fulfilling either the spirit or the letter of the engagement. He did not understand the hon. First Minister to attempt to justify the proposal he had made to Parliament upon any other ground than that the Government made an engagement to commence work immediately, and in pursuance of that agreement he asked the House to give authority which, whatever might be the general principle which ought to govern the making of such contracts, and whatever might be the principle to which the party of which the hon. First Minister was the head was committed on that subject, it was clear that no ordinary circumstance could apply to this case. Parliament was asked by the present Government last session to give power for the construction of the Pacific Railway itself, and the Act passed contained provisions

with respect to the contracts for the work especially declaring that no contracts for the construction of any portion of the line should be binding until they were laid before Parliament for one month, or a shorter time if they were approved by resolution. The same Act contained a provision as to certain portions of the line which were to be exempted from that provision, and with respect to the branches the assent of Parliament was not stipulated to be obtained. His hon. friend the First Minister justified—and he received the unanimous assent of the House to his justification—his departure from the general principle and from the application of the general principle in the Act of the Government upon the ground of public necessity, upon the ground that it was expected and believed that arrangements could be made for the prosecution of the work of constructing those branches during the season, and that the public interest required they should be prosecuted during that season. And, therefore, he asked Parliament so far to depart from the general principle he had asserted and maintained with respect to the main line, and that the House assented to. His hon. friend the First Minister acted in the spirit of the main provisions of the Act, and as regarded the Georgian Bay branch he did not avail himself of the power thus conferred on the Government, but provided that the contract for the construction of the road should be liable to the same conditions as contracts for the main line, and be laid on the table of the House during one month, and it did lay on the table nearly that period. Therefore the only question the House had to consider with respect to this point of the Bill was, whether the justification for departing from the recognized rule, as established and embodied in the statute book, was sufficient. The whole policy of this measure depended upon the engagement made with British Columbia, and if the House was prepared to implement that engagement in its entirety, it must be prepared to give the exceptional authority asked by the Government. As he understood the general principle with reference to the expenditure of public money which had been advocated by hon. gentlemen who sat near him, it was that the House ought as far as possible to retain and maintain the control of Parliament over the expenditure of the public funds. That was the

*Hon. Mr. Blake.*