

involved in our meeting in a sufficient manner the demands which were in this way forced upon us.

Now, it may be said : You had a force of North-west Mounted Police in that section ; why could you not rely on them to preserve order ? What could they have done in the face of such a condition of things as we believed might possibly arise in that country ? What would be the use of a small force with thousands of starving men about them struggling for the possession of the scanty supply of food that there might be there. Such a struggle would probably result in a perfect carnival of crime, and would reflect most deservedly upon the Government and people of Canada. Now, I ask hon. gentlemen opposite if, in making this statement upon the facts which I have presented to you in this brief way, I am exaggerating the obligation which rested upon the Government ? In what direction did the duty of Government lie ? Remember, Mr. Speaker, further, this condition of things which I have depicted to you is a condition of things which we regard as likely to arise in our own country, not in some remote disconnected section of the world in which we have no particular interest, but within the boundaries of Canada, for the good government of which, for the protection of life and property within which we are as much responsible as we would be in any of the settled portions of Canada. As we are thus responsible, a failure to realize and prepare for the duties which rested upon us could not have failed to cast the utmost discredit upon the Government and people of Canada.

Another imperative reason for immediate action, which I feel justified in mentioning, is that, if the precious metals abound in that country to the extent to which it is represented they abound, a question of Canadian trade immediately and necessarily arises. The importance of securing that trade and preserving it to Canada becomes a national question of the greatest interest, and makes it all the more important, and all the more necessary that we should act promptly, lest by inaction on our part this important trade, or a very considerable part of it, should be diverted, and might not at any later period return. This demand for action on our part, from the business men of Canada, from the manufacturers, the farmers, the wage-earners, from all classes in Canada, was that we should see to it that this trade should not be lost to us—for it is ours, it is within our own borders and of right belongs to us, if, by any legitimate or proper means we can secure it for the people of our own country. Looking at that phase of the question also, I ask what was the nature of the duty which lay upon the Government of Canada ? With these convictions, with this sense of responsibility, ought we to have waited until it was too late to act for this year ? Ought we to have deferred ac-

tion with fear and trembling lest we might perhaps do something which Parliament might not in every particular approve ? Ought we to wait for fear of inviting condemnation, or ought we to act ? Our conclusion was that we should act. And we did so relying upon the good sense of Parliament—of both branches of Parliament—for the approval of our action when the whole measure in all its bearings is understood.

Now, Sir, I have endeavoured, briefly, and I am quite conscious I have done it very feebly, to state the situation as the Government found it in that country. And I may say that immediately after the last session of Parliament, feeling that all the information that it would be possible for us to procure ought to be procured, and that information should be as accurate and reliable as possible. The Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) himself proceeded to the Pacific Coast and went to, or very nearly to, the scene of action in that country, passed through two or three of the passes and made himself acquainted with the situation as far as it was possible for him to do. Further, he despatched officers, competent and reliable officers, to look the ground over and explore it. He sent railway engineers to find out what were the most advantageous and the most favourable routes for railway construction, so that he might be satisfied and be in a position to satisfy the Government in regard to this question of railway construction and the best routes that were to be found which could be taken advantage of with the least possible delay. The gentlemen who were employed by him for that purpose gave their very best attention to the duties with which they were entrusted. They worked faithfully and energetically, but the task was an arduous one, and it was quite impossible even to finish their labours earlier than they did ; and it was not until about the 15th of December that we received from these officials their reports.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. May I ask the Minister of Railways if he will be good enough to lay a copy of these reports upon the Table of the House ?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. I think there will be no objection to my hon. friend being furnished this information. My recollection is—and the Minister of the Interior will be able to set me right, if I am wrong—that while he received an interim report about the latter part of the month of December, their final report was not received until towards the middle of January. You will see, therefore, that we had not been in possession of information very long before we took action. Perhaps it might be of interest to the House for me to state in a brief way the general result of the information which was furnished by these officers. There are a number of possible routes for a railway