

trophe was imminent, Mr. Cooper could not go up to Quebec and visit the bridge. The man in charge had to rush off to New York to see Mr. Cooper and explain the position to him. And Mr. Cooper, instead of going up to see for himself, had to accept the description given by another engineer, and on that basis give advice. And this, apparently, was the expert whom the government or the bridge company employed. We all recollect what occurred at the time. There were gentlemen on the bridge who were informed that there was something wrong with one of the beams. Notwithstanding that, the unfortunate men who perished were allowed to go on working on the structure. An immense machine used for carrying heavy loads on to the bridge was allowed to roll out with its load, endangering the defective work. There was not a man there, apparently, competent to decide and act. The bridge company had nobody to do what was necessary; the government had nobody—it was everybody's business, apparently, and therefore nobody's business. And the bridge went down and the unfortunate men were hurled into eternity.

I do not wish to take up time unnecessarily or to go into everything that might well be said in discussing this matter. I have only to say this, that I was astonished when the question was asked of the minister and he had to make the reply: 'He was unable to say, he presumed the law had been complied with.' Possibly the right hon. gentleman may have thought there was something in the Railway Act that governed this matter, or perhaps in the Act respecting public works; or he may have thought the law was in the Act relating to the Receiver General. But he had in his mind that there was something in the law. One would almost imagine that he had never heard of the agreement. Not a word about the agreement, not a word as to whether they had complied with and carried out the intention of the agreement. He simply answered, I cannot say, I suppose the law has been obeyed.' Now, the Finance Minister was particularly responsible for that guarantee, and it came rather more in his line. Then this was a great railway bridge to connect all the railways entering Quebec, and one would have thought that the Minister of Railways would have taken some little interest in it, and found out something about it so that he could have prompted the right hon. gentleman and told him what to say. And there was the Minister of Public Works. Surely such a bridge as this was a great public work, though not technically under his charge. Now, when these four gentlemen, the right hon. the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Railways and the Minister of Public Works, had been sitting together around the table in the Privy Council not

so many days ago, and cautiously settling what His Excellency would be asked to say about this catastrophe, surely they might have taken enough interest in the subject to ascertain, a most obvious thing, what had been done on the part of the government for the safety of the workmen and to see that the work was properly supervised. Evidently not one of them thought about it, they were absolutely indifferent to it. The only answer we get is: 'We cannot say, we suppose the law was complied with.' Did any mortal man ever hear of four responsible persons giving such an answer to such a question? There they sat, a wretched quartet, knowing nothing, not even taking the trouble to know, although aware that they would be questioned in this House. Mr. Parent probably could have told the Minister of Finance if he had chosen to ask him. The Minister of Public Works I think could have found out something. They could have sent for Mr. Parent and found out. If the government had not appointed an expert themselves they might at least have found out what Mr. Parent had done. Millions of public money had been spent, and hundreds of lives in jeopardy. Millions have been lost and lives have been lost, and these gentlemen quietly settle the speech of His Excellency, and do not ask one word that every sensible man would have thought it necessary to ask.

Mr. Speaker, I have somewhere read that every country is governed as it deserves. If that be really so, and if Canada be no exception to the rule, what can she have done to deserve such government as this?

I beg to move in amendment to the address:

That the said motion be amended by adding to the proposed address to His Excellency the Governor General the following paragraph at the end thereof:

We desire to express our respectful regret that more adequate reference has not been made to matters of public interest alluded to in your Excellency's gracious speech, and that other matters of grave public concern have altogether escaped mention therein, and especially that the allusion in your Excellency's gracious speech to the collapse of the great bridge in course of construction across the St. Lawrence river omits any reference to the unfortunate and unbusinesslike conditions under which that great national work has been carried on.

We especially deplore the loss of life on that occasion, and we also deplore not only the destruction and loss of millions of capital, but the serious delay in a great work which forms an essential part of the National Transcontinental Railway, and we greatly regret the unbusinesslike arrangements and absence of efficient control in the public interest with regard to that work.

Mr. SPEAKER. In regard to the first portion of this amendment, I am inclined to think that it is a clause which cannot