

therefore, although I have no more interest than my hon. friend, the leader of the Opposition, in this transaction—and I believe in my soul he has not a farthing interest in it—although I have no interest directly or indirectly, I do hope that these contractors or the company which may become associated with them, may make handsome profits out of this venture. They deserve to do so. Why, if when we were facing a serious crisis—for I say it was a crisis in the history of our Dominion—these gentlemen, who are all responsible men, were willing to assume the responsibility of carrying this enterprise through, who is it who will be small enough to deny them handsome results? I certainly would not. If they, by the expenditure of their means, by their energy and business and organizing capacity can find precious metals of great value in this territory, and develop it, who is going to prosper? Is there any business man, is there a producer or manufacturer in Canada, who will not benefit by the enhanced prosperity and increased business which will flow from the development of this country, if these people have the valuable property hon. gentlemen opposite say they have? But the statements of hon. gentlemen opposite are mere conjectures, utterly incapable of proof.

Mr. FOSTER. Has my hon. friend any information as to the acreage of the placer areas in the Yukon district?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. I have not any available for the hon. gentleman at this moment.

Mr. FOSTER. Have my hon. friend and the Government placed any value at all upon this acreage of placer mining country which is to be chosen by these gentlemen—any value at all per acre?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. No doubt the hon. gentleman, with his large financial and business experience, and his somewhat extensive mining knowledge, will be able to form a judgment on that question perhaps as well as any member of the Government.

Mr. FOSTER. But I am not introducing the Bill.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. I would like to ask the hon. gentleman if he has formed any judgment as to the value of these lands? Now, we are proposing to give the contractors 25,000 acres per mile, guarding the selection of these lands as carefully as it is possible for us to guard it. Whether we have given them in one of these acres a bonanza or a second Eldorado we do not know. We may have done so; but we may not. It is all a chance, but it is one of those chances in which happily for the Government and

Mr. BLAIR.

the country, the risk is all carried and borne by the other parties to the contract. We do not assume any risk; they do. And, Sir, upon all the principles which govern business transactions it is only fair that if these people who will carry this risk, who will expend their millions in carrying out an enterprise for the benefit of this country, should reap magnificent results. I do not think the people of Canada will refuse them the benefits which they have thus deserved. We take none of the chances; they take them all; and I think that, under the circumstances, this must be the strongest confirmation of the policy and the conduct of the Government in the judgment of any fair-minded man. I do not expect hon. friends opposite to approve of this thing. But I am glad to know that in the main, in the substantial features of this contract and this policy, we have the approval and commendation of the hon. gentleman (Sir Charles Tupper) who leads the Opposition. I am glad that that hon. gentleman has taught some of his supporters that there is in the ranks of the great Conservative party at least one man who has had enough business experience, enough experience of the responsibilities which attaches to members of Government, who has enough patriotism and breadth of mind to rise, for the consideration of a great public question, above the mere consideration of party ends and party interests. I have not very often been the recipient of compliments from my hon. friend opposite; I do not know that we have exchanged any of a flattering kind, nor do I expect any in the future. But I will say that if the party were constituted of such as some who have given expression to their views upon this question in this House, then, I think the party would not deserve to be led by a man of the breadth and capacity of the hon. gentleman who now leads the Conservative party in this House. Outside of all these questions on the value of the land, and so on, which must be a matter of mere guess, of speculation and conjecture at the best, I feel confident that the country would reap its benefit not by the holding of these lands particularly. It would reap no special benefit from that. These lands must go to somebody, somebody must acquire them in order to work them—otherwise they are no better than if no precious metal lay under the soil—we are not doing any more than is done, even by the great country to the south of us, for when they convey an acre of land they pass the title to all minerals without reservation even of the precious metals. In this case we get the railway built in that country by giving away its lands, and the Government will find its account in the increased business which will result to Canada if a fraction of these imaginary ideas as to the value of this property is realized as the result of the contractors.