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It did not become so known until the arrival of the first steamboat from Alaska, bearing a large quantity of gold, the arrival of which created great excitement—nothing definite was before the Government as to the richness of the discoveries or as to the discoveries being so extensive as to warrant any large or exorbitant expenditure in connection with the Yukon district. But prior to that time, some steps had been taken. I did not leave the matter in the same shape as it was left by hon. gentlemen opposite, who year after year neglected, so far as I know, to even read the reports of the officers they sent into that country. Prior to that time, I had taken steps to send there a gold commissioner, instructed and authorized to transact the business that would arise in connection with mining claims, with two assistants, this force being deemed amply sufficient for the work so far as we had any idea of it at that time. As the excitement increased, we took such further steps as seemed to be necessary. We adopted measures to increase the number of the mounted police and to have them selected and all necessary supplies forwarded as quickly as possible. But we did not realize, and I do not think the House will blame us for not realizing until the summer had nearly passed that there was going to be anything like the rush to that country which materialized last fall. We only saw what was going on around us, and what we could gather from our reading of the newspapers from day to day; and, not being desirous of taking steps of importance not justified by the facts, and not being desirous of making expenditures we could not justify, we only took the steps that were absolutely necessary at that time. Later on we found, on account of the totally unprecedented circumstances which had arisen, and which were likely to arise, we had to take further and much more extensive steps in connection with the protection and provisioning of that country, as to which I will take the liberty of giving some facts in a few moments. I have spoken only of this particular phase of the question for the purpose of showing that the hon. leader of the Opposition, in his utter desperation, in his desire to conceal from the House and the public the fact that he has been switched into line by the hon. member for East York (Mr. Maclean), has endeavoured to put a meaning on the words of the Minister of Railways which they do not bear, and to make an attack on the Government's position, in which they are impregnable and not open to attack. Then, the hon. gentleman proceeded to make an attack upon myself; and I do not know whether I like the hon. gentleman better when he attacks me or commends me, but, on the whole, I think I prefer the attack. My hon. friends around me are rather suspicious when the hon. gentleman commends me. The hon. gentleman said: "Why were steps not taken in regard to pushing forward

this work when Mr. Jennings met the Minister of the Interior and came down with him on the "Quadra" from Wrangell to Vancouver. Will any man believe that Mr. Jennings did not communicate all the necessary information in regard to this route to the Minister of the Interior when they travelled together on the steamer?" Does any member believe that a Minister in his senses would take steps to have a railway constructed from Stikine River to Teslin Lake to get into the Yukon River by the Hootalinqua River, when he did not know whether that river was navigable or not? That, I presume, is the way in which the Minister of Railways, in the plenitude of his experience, would have proceeded.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh.

#### THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR.

The ex-Minister of Railways and Canals (Sir Charles Tupper), I mean. The hon. leader of the Opposition has given great attention to some parts of Mr. Jennings's report, and I recommend him to give some attention to some other portions. If the hon. gentleman will look at page 13, he will find a report dated January 6th, by Mr. Arthur St. Cyr. This report Mr. Jennings did not receive until a few days later, and I do not think I received Mr. Jennings's report until the 13th or 14th of the month. I could not have called for tenders for the construction of the work on Mr. Jennings's report because the report to which I have alluded, as necessary, was the report to be made by Mr. St. Cyr, who was sent by Mr. Jennings, under my special instructions, to ascertain whether Teslin Lake and Hootalinqua River were navigable or not. So, when we commenced our proceedings, we had an intelligent plan in our minds, and when we got our reports completed, we knew certain facts beyond a doubt, and that the route we selected was a route which would be a proper one for Parliament to adopt for the purpose of getting passengers and supplies into that country. We could not have known anything about it from Mr. Jennings's report, if there had been no report made as to the navigability of the waters below. This report was dated 6th January; it was sent to Mr. Jennings a day or two later, and it got into my hands about January 13th. The contract was signed on January 25th; and I think the House will agree with me, without any further discussion, that no additional answer whatever is required to the strictures of the hon. gentleman on the Government for not having proceeded with more speed. I do not know that it is necessary for me to make any more detailed reference to the remarks of the hon. gentleman (Sir Charles Tupper) except to say that among the principal reasons, or alleged reasons, which he gave this afternoon for his change of mind, was that another offer had been made to construct a line of railway from Pyramid Harbour by way of Chilkat Pass and Port