

"For example, we gave the sum of \$20,000, without the immediate authority of Parliament, to alleviate the distress which followed the St. John fire. (Hear, hear, and cheers). And, I believe that, under the circumstances, we were right in doing so. I contend that we had a perfect right to lend, or allow the Canada Central Railway to use, a portion of the rails on which we had a lien."

I contended that, in this case, one is intended to justify the other.

MR. MACKENZIE: Not at all.

MR. PLUMB said then he did not understand English. The two things were put in juxtaposition in such a manner that no other conclusion could be drawn. He thought this was quite sufficient to substantiate the statement he had made. With regard to the motion now under discussion, he considered it was very unfortunate that this great delay had taken place in the execution of the Government buildings destroyed by the fire, and he did not think it fair to charge the hon. member for King's (Mr. Domville) with making improper insinuations when he said it was rumoured that the delay was made for political purposes. He showed expressly that such a thing had been stated, and not that he stated it himself. But it was, to say the least, most unfortunate that such a delay had occurred; it should have been the duty of the Government to reconstruct the Government buildings at once; they should not have waited until private enterprise had almost built up the city before they had laid a stone. He (Mr. Plumb) considered that his hon. friend was fully justified in any remarks he had made with reference to the delay.

MR. BURPEE said that, as soon as possible after the fire, all the *débris* and material was cleared away. No effort of the Government could have enabled them to get the plans, specifications and tenders asked for, to enable the buildings to be erected in the winter season. The Government would have had to wait until the spring to start building in St. John; but, he presumed, the plans would be so completed now that tenders would soon be asked for, and the buildings would be commenced as soon this spring as possible. There had been no efforts spared

MR. PLUMB.

on the part of the Government, nor had they been actuated by any political feeling, nor had any time been lost. Last fall was occupied in laying the foundations of the different buildings. On no principle could the Government be justified in remitting the duties on the imports into St. John after the fire. There had been fires in Woodstock, St. Stephen's, Quebec, and all over the Dominion, and, in every case, the sufferers would have just as much right to have the duty remitted. The principle adopted in one instance would have to be extended to every case. The goods destroyed in St. John were not all the property of the people of that city, but had been sent there from other parts of the Province. The Government subscription, \$20,000, was given immediately after the fire, before any subscription was started, and they gave substantial benefit to the people in another respect by remitting the duty on bricks. He did not think the Government could be censured in any way for anything in relation to the great disaster.

MR. BLAKE said he understood the complaint against the Government to be, first, that the amount of pecuniary assistance, directly granted out of the public Treasury, was inadequate. It must be remembered that it would be quite out of the question for the Government to interfere at all in the way of pecuniary aid, except in a case altogether exceptional in its magnitude. Unfortunately, in this country and on this continent, disastrous fires occurred very frequently; and, although great local disasters were occasioned, and an enormous disparity between the insurance and the loss existed in every instance, yet no proposal was ever made, nor could reasonably be made, in such circumstances for any relief at all. The principle upon which alone the Government could interfere was, where the disaster was so appalling that the common necessities of life were required to be supplied at once in order to prevent distress and suffering, where the calamity was of such magnitude that the charitable subscriptions of the neighbouring towns were inadequate to deal with it—then, only, could the Govern-