

It has been urged in this House, and I say it has been proved, that the present scheme laid before the House for its approval, is a more favorable scheme than that proposed in 1872. Whatever may be the merits of the offers or tenders, whatever may be the merits of the last offer that has just been laid on the Table, I believe no man of candor and common sense and who understands figures, but will see that the proposition which this Government, on its responsibility, entered into with the Syndicate in 1880, is more favorable to the country than the arrangement made with Sir Hugh Allan in 1872. And I would ask this House and this country if Canada would not have been a great gainer if we had accepted and carried out that proposition of Sir Hugh Allan in 1872. Nine precious years have been lost since that time which can never be recovered, during the whole of which that road would have been in successful progress of construction: the men engaged in that scheme, if they could have got the ear of the European capitalists, were strong enough to push that road across the country, and at the end of those nine years, instead of there being scarcely the foot-print of the white man outside the Province of Manitoba, there would have been hundreds of thousands of people who have gone from mere despair to the United States, crowding into our own North-West Territories. That country, instead of having but a small settlement in the eastern end of it, would have been the happy home of hundreds of thousands—to use the smallest figure—of civilized men, of earnest, active, laboring men, working for themselves and their families, and making that country much sooner than it will be now, a populous and prosperous country. But there is little use in regrets like these. We on this side of the House are not responsible for the delay, we are not responsible for the loss of time, and we appeal confidently to the country, and confidently to posterity. We appeal confidently to every candid man to say if this Dominion of ours of which we are so proud, about the future of which we are so anxious and yet so certain, would not have been infinitely greater in our time, in the time of the oldest of us, if the future of that country would not have been opened out as a great branch of the Dominion if the contract of 1872 had been carried out. Still, Sir, it was not to be; our efforts failed and we feel in those efforts, we were succeeded by a Government strong in numbers, strong in ability, and at the head of it a practical man. The fact of his being a practical man was a matter of boast and of just boast, among those who rallied around him. He had directed his best energies to the subject. He had at his back a body so strong that no Opposition could effectively thwart him, oppose him, or even to obstruct him. And that hon. gentleman states himself that he was not obstructed, that he was not opposed, that he was not in any way impeded by the Opposition of the day. And he, Sir, took up the same line of policy in essence that we initiated in 1872; and he endeavored honestly and faithfully, I believe, to relieve his Government and relieve himself and his party from the responsibilities of his position, and of the pledges which were made and which he and those who served under him made, and which were obligations which could not without dishonor be broken, which could not be delayed, which could not without disgrace and discredit be postponed. It was admitted that it was a sacred obligation; it was admitted that there was a treaty made with British Columbia, with the people and the Government of British Columbia, and not only was it an agreement and a solemn bargain made between Canada and British Columbia, but it was formally sanctioned by Her Majesty's Government. It was a matter of Colonial policy and Imperial policy in England that the road should be constructed, and the late Government, headed by my hon. friend from Lambton—who is absent from his place

to-day, and who I fear is absent from the same cause which compelled my absence on Friday night, and I regret his absence very sincerely—I say my hon. friend felt himself bound to that policy. Both the Government of which I was the head and the Government of which he was the head were bound by the original resolutions that were passed at the time that British Columbia came in, were bound to the policy that this road should be built with the aid of money and land, by an incorporated company, if possible, and, some went so far as to say—built in no other way. He was hampered by that obligation, but although it hampered both Governments, yet inasmuch as it was the declared wish of Parliament, and must stand until it was removed by Parliament, that resolution was not an infringement of the original arrangement. The delegates from British Columbia sat here when the motion was carried, they were here assenting to it at the time it became in fact the law of the land, and when they went home there was not a word of objection or reproach from the Legislature and the people of British Columbia. All they wanted was that the spirit of the resolution should be carried out so far as men could carry out honestly and fairly, and straightforwardly, the solemn compact, the obligatory pledge. The treaty not to be broken without dishonor into which we had entered. Both Governments felt themselves bound to make every exertion to build the railway by means of the intervention of a body of capitalists incorporated for that purpose. As we had tried to do so did the succeeding Government, and they advertised in the manner which has been stated and explained, and I need not go through the details again. Advertisements were issued by the hon. member for Lambton, then the head of the Government, calling on the capitalists all over the world to come forward and tender for this work. But the tenders did not come in. Whether it was that Canada had not the credit it now has; whether it was that the Government of the day had not the credit that the present Government of Canada has, whether it was that the circumstances of the money market were unpropitious at the time, whether it was that the country in the North-West was not so well-known then as now, I cannot say. Perhaps all these causes, or some of them, conjoined to prevent success, but at all events the call upon the capitalists of the world by the late Government did not succeed. Sir, as I understand it, that was not a mere offer giving capitalists a certain day to respond, as if you were going to build a house, calling up on them to get in tenders by a particular day at twelve o'clock, and informing them that no offer could be received afterwards. There was, in the first place, an invitation from our Government calling upon capitalists to compete. There was an invitation from the succeeding Government calling upon the capitalists of the world to compete. That was an announcement to the whole world, and when we received, gladly and hopefully received, an offer from parties who, we believe, were in every way able to carry out the enterprise if they undertook it, we felt that we were carrying out the repeatedly expressed wish of Parliament, the desire of every man really on both sides of the House, that the Government should be rid at once and for all from this responsibility. And, Sir, I might allude to a speech I made before going to England, in the spring of 1880, and I do so, because it was a notice to the country. The hon. gentleman, with his legal mind sticking upon legal technicalities, may argue that a speech of mine was not a legal notice; but upon a previous occasion when the hon. member for Lambton was forcing a measure upon the country without notice, he said, indignantly, to this House: "Every man has read my speech at Sarnia. When I went home to be elected as Premier, I gave notice to the whole country of the policy of the Government, and we have not taken the country by surprise."