

dress a point to which my hon. friend did not call attention, the proposition to build a telegraph from Skagway to Yukon. I remember the speech of my hon. friend, the Minister of Justice, last session, in which he portrayed the dire consequences that were to follow if a railway or tramway was not built from the head of the Stikine to Teslin Lake—the flag was to be pulled down, miners were to starve, the country was to pass over to foreigners and other direful consequences were to follow. Nothing in the world would save that country to Canada unless that tramway and the ice road up the Stikine River were built. My hon. friend has concluded to build a telegraph line commencing in what he termed, although we deny it, United States territory. My hon. friend said last session that all the trade of the Klondike would be lost—that that country itself would be lost if we could not have entrance to the Yukon by some other route than Skagway, Dyea or Pyramid Harbour. Now, if the existence of the country was at stake through the failure of the Stikine-Teslin railway project into the Yukon district, how much worse will it be when you build a telegraph line to Dawson from Skagway, a port now held by the United States, and where every single telegram that is sent from this country to that portion of the north-west will have to pass under the surveillance of United States officials? If it was so very dangerous to establish railway communication with Dawson via Skagway, it must be equally dangerous now. I am not finding fault with the proposed construction of that telegraph line; if I had any fault to find it would be that you did not commence the construction of a telegraph long ago. I think that was the most essential thing to do in order to assist the trade of that country. I believe telegraphic communication from one portion of the British Empire to the other would do more for the unification of the Empire than any other scheme or policy that can be adopted. Trade follows the electric wire and without such communication you cannot develop trade or commerce such as you would establish if there were telegraphic communication with all portions of the country. I am very glad that the government have adopted that scheme at last, but it is totally inconsistent with the declaration which they made twelve months ago as to the absolute neces-

sity of being able to get into that country without touching United States territory. We believe, looking at the map as far as I understand it, that Skagway belongs to Canada, but it is in possession of the United States, and so long as they hold it, just so long will they compel British subjects to submit to all the customs regulations and whatever surveillance they think proper to impose upon telegraphic communication. What my hon. friend should have done, I venture to give him this opinion, although I declined to give him an opinion of what should be done under other circumstances.

Hon. Mr. MILLS—We had that before.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—What?

Hon. Mr. MILLS—Your opinion.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—

That does not relieve you of having taken another position and having made other promises. Had the Premier and the government, instead of acknowledging the supremacy of the United States at Skagway and other disputed points, asked them to enter into a modus vivendi under which the matter would remain in abeyance until an arbitration had settled the question, instead of acknowledging their right to that country as was done, we would have been in a much stronger position to-day, and would have shown better statesmanship than the government has done under the circumstances. Notwithstanding these facts, however, my hon. friend (Mr. Kerr) considers them the best government that ever existed in Canada. I was a little amused at the interpretation which my hon. friend gave to the question of gerrymandering. It is an exotic, he says; it is a United States invention, I may say a unique invention, and there was no person who introduced it into this country but my hon. friend's friends, and they have been using it ever since. We have been denying it. I am not prepared to admit the statements which have been made as to redistribution of seats in the past. I deny that they have been of the character designated. What is intended to be done in this matter, as in the matter of the commission, I cannot say. We are debating the question in the dark. We know that the Confederation Act—if you refer to the 51st and 52nd clauses of