

foothold in the Klondike mining regions. Some persons, perhaps not quite so conservative and not so careful, estimate the number far in advance of the figures I have given, and it is true I think that, railroad or no railroad, the chances are that these people will work their way into that country. I may be mistaken, if I am mistaken I am subject to correction, but I believe that the Klondike country is a country which produces nothing in the way of substantial food. I have heard it said, and I have not very much doubt myself upon the subject, that the Klondike would not grow a Lapland turnip, and it must be apparent to all that every pound of food, all the supplies required for the maintenance of that large population, must be brought into that country from outside. I hope and trust that the largest portion of it may go in from Canada; but let me say this, that unless we are prepared to start ourselves; unless we are prepared to put forth herculean efforts, the chances are that in the coming year we shall not reap the harvest, but some one else will who is not so well entitled to it as we are. I do not suppose that it is possible for us to intelligently discuss what is known as the Yukon Railway contract as the papers are not before the House. I do not know that the matter has been referred to very much upon the floor of Parliament during this session, but it is a well known fact that the press outside are dealing with the question from day to day, and that there are different opinions with regard to the propriety of the conduct of the government with reference to this matter. I am prepared to speak on this question to-night as I understand it, simply from the reports which have come to me through the same sources through which they must have reached the ears of hon. gentlemen. If when the papers are brought down and the contract is laid before Parliament, I discover anything in it which I believe is not in the interests of Canada, I shall be prepared to disapprove of it, notwithstanding what I may say to-night. As I understand it, a contract has been entered into by the government of Canada with a firm of contractors. I think they must be responsible contractors, when I take into account the fact that they have already put up \$250,000 by way of security for the completion of the work which they have undertaken. The gentlemen, Messrs. Mann & McKenzie, have

undertaken to build a road from the Stikine River navigation to Teslin Lake, estimated at 150 miles. In addition to that, they have undertaken to provide a sled road as early as the month of March to facilitate communication with that country. Then, the price they are to get is 3,750,000 acres of land in alternate lots in the Klondike, or the mineral region. Besides that, the government have agreed, I believe, that no aid or encouragement is to be given for five years to any line from the Pacific coast to go into that country. As I am informed, and as I believe, the general consensus of opinion is that the government have selected the best route in the interests of all Canada. There is no difference of opinion on that score. If there is, I so far have not been made aware of it. I think it is admitted on all hands that in the selection of that route the government are following the policy of keeping Canada for the Canadians; but there are objections to that contract. First among them is this: it is said that the contract was made privately—that tenders should have been called for. Ordinarily, I admit that that would be the correct course to pursue, and there would be nothing to justify a departure from that course, save the emergency with which the government is confronted at this moment. The loss of a few weeks now might imperil, not merely the completion of that work, but so interfere with the construction of the road as to render it useless for another year. If the country is what we suppose it to be, we cannot afford to take any chances. If we had it there now it would be a great boon to Canada; if we can have it before the first of September, it will be a great boon to Canada. If we fail I am satisfied it will be a great loss to Canada. The chances are that next year we will have a population, in that country, ten times—I might say twenty times—greater than we have this year. Then again, it is said that the government should have paid cash and should not have given land. It does seem to me that if there is one provision in that contract which is likely to commend itself to the people of, shall I say all Canada—to the people, at all events, of the older provinces of Canada—it is that particular feature. I do not believe that it is right to tax the people who have no direct interest in that country continually for the purpose