

was this further circumstance that, in the absence of such competent expert there might be delay in remedying anything going wrong. In the case of any mishap or casualty, instant action might be necessary, and any hesitation or delay might be ruinous. In the progress of the work a hundred contingencies might arise requiring the most prompt attention. The government should have foreseen that in the absence of proper officials and competent authority something terrible might happen, as it did. And who was likely to be the loser? The people of this country are providing the money. If the Quebec Bridge Company have been neglectful, if their officers have been incompetent, that company is not worth sixpence. This country is providing all the money, and you might as well try to take the breeks off a highlandman as to get anything off that company. The Phoenix Bridge Company must have been paid very large sums on account of their work. If the money is to be recovered from them, the Quebec Bridge Company or the government will have to go to the United States and sue for it, and I suppose, after long litigation, we might, or might not, get a judgment, and get the money.

That is the position we are in. The hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) referred to this subject, and in doing so quoted from the 'Scientific American,' which, as everybody knows, is one of the most capable engineering journals in America, having certainly no superior. The writer of the article in that journal says:

It is evident, however, from the statements of the consulting engineer, that the enterprise laboured under two serious drawbacks—

Now, the first of these drawbacks, I understand the right hon. the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) to say Mr. Cooper, the consulting engineer, does not admit—the insufficiency of money. I will not refer to that further. But the writer in the 'Scientific American' goes on:

The consulting engineer's detailed story of the discovery of the eccentricity in the bottom chord; the making light of it by the engineer in charge; and the tardy and roundabout measures taken to stop all further additions to the weight on the bridge, read more like the story of the building of some county bridge than the record of the erection of the greatest work of bridge engineering of the century.

And there you see, I say, the direct result of this unfortunate arrangement made by the government with the Quebec company.

Later in his speech, as reported at page 53 of 'Hansard,' the leader of the opposition said:

What I ventured to ask was whether or not the plans had been approved by order in council, as provided by the Act of 1903.

To this the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) said:

Mr. BARKER.

As to that I cannot say, but I presume that the law has been observed.

The right hon. gentleman says also that they had to act upon the report of the engineer; I suppose the engineer of the Railway Department—or was it the architect of the Public Works Department? And had the engineer who passed the plans annexed to this agreement, which was got through so hastily, as little time to study the plans as parliament had to study the agreement? It would be very interesting to know that. Now, I venture to say, there is no chief engineer of any railway in Canada or in the United States who would dare to assume the responsibility for settling the plans for such a work. I venture to say that if the right hon. gentleman had asked Mr. Schrieber in those days to approve of these plans that gentleman would have declined the responsibility. I venture to say the chief engineer of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the chief engineer of the Grand Trunk or the chief engineer of the Canadian Northern would have declined to accept such a responsibility. During late years, since bridge building has taken the form of iron and steel structure, the engineering for such work has grown into almost a distinct profession. The men who design these bridges, who undertake the criticism of the plans and specifications, are experts who give their whole time and thought and attention to this class of work, and the ordinary engineer on a railway never interferes with it. I know that of my own knowledge as to engineers. I have seen it stated in the press, and it may have appeared in some of the evidence taken by the commission, that the Deputy Minister of Railways, Mr. Schrieber, advised the government to employ a competent expert to superintend the work on the bridge, and it is said that the government passed an order in council in accordance with that request, and that later they cancelled that order in council. Now, I do not assert this as a fact, but I have seen it stated in the press, apparently as taken from evidence given somewhere. But we have the extraordinary fact that the Prime Minister does not know whether there was such an expert or not. When he is asked a question by the leader of the opposition his only reply is that he presumes the law has been complied with. I would not be understood as stating that there was no consulting engineer. Mr. Cooper, of New York, a very eminent engineer, was employed—by whom I do not know, whether by the Quebec Bridge Company or by this government. But he was not employed to go to the works, to stay upon the work, to watch its progress from day to day, as was necessary for any proper supervision. Mr. Cooper is, as I have said, a very eminent engineer. But he is a man of seventy years of age and in feeble health, unable to leave New York. When this catas-