

fidential communications, but, if the consent of the imperial government was not obtained, that he would bring them down without such consent. And, I suppose that in a matter involving the public funds of this country, a matter which the government should not have allowed to be made confidential in the first instance, my right hon. friend might very fairly follow the precedent established by himself and take the course which he said he would take in bringing down such documents whether their consent was obtained or not.

My right hon. friend referred to the familiar doctrine in Todd's Parliamentary Practice—that there are certain confidential communications as to which parliament is not entitled, at the moment at least, and may never be entitled, to have information. For example, negotiations with a foreign government; matters affecting the defence of the country; information afforded to officers of the government of breach of the Customs Law;—matters of that kind are kept from parliament in the public interest for the reason that, if parliament could claim at any moment to be seized of any information of that kind it would be impossible to carry on the government of the country.

But such considerations do not apply to the application of a body of promoters to the government of this country for public aid to a public undertaking. They have no relevancy to such a subject. A demand for assistance from the treasury of this country cannot be confidential. If this application was made to the government to assist the Grand Trunk Pacific out of the private moneys of the members of the government that is one thing; but that is not the application as I understand it. The application is made for assistance to this undertaking out of the public moneys of the people of this country and the people of this country are entitled to know all applications of that kind and the government should not receive such communications as confidential.

Now my right hon. friend ought to be reminded of another circumstance in connection with this matter, and it is this: We did not understand some of the allusions which were made to this document last year. We have had the repeated declarations of this government—which I will not review again as I have already reviewed them—we have had the repeated declarations of this government during the past session and during the present session, that everything relating to this question was before the House. We made these demands upon the government in consequence of certain utterances of two ministers of the Crown last year. One of those utterances was made by Mr. Blair, not at that time a minister of the Crown, because before making this speech in parliament he had resigned his position as Minister of Rail-

ways and Canals. But in the 'Hansard' of 1903, at page 8416, Mr. Blair felt himself at liberty to make the statement which I will now read to the House from his speech:

The thing was never mooted before, and the government took no action, until the Grand Trunk Railway Company conceived that it would be in their own interest to have the railway project liberally aided by the parliament of Canada, which they desired to promote. That is the secret of the whole business, that is where it originated.

I call my right hon. friend's attention to the statement of his ex-Minister of Railways and Canals that a proposal to the government was the origin of the project which the government brought down; and when he says that this document was not germane to the discussion which we have had, he is in direct conflict with that statement of his ex-minister, who says: That proposal is the secret of the whole business; that is where it originated. There cannot be any doubt of the correctness of Mr. Blair's statement, because I have pointed out the striking similarity between the project for the construction of the western division and the proposal made by the Grand Trunk Pacific to the government. The two things speak for themselves. I need not emphasize the fact, I need not elaborate it. The line from North Bay to Moncton was an addition made by the government and except for that addition the original proposal remained and was carried out by the government almost exactly as it was proposed to the government by the Grand Trunk Pacific Company, with the exception of course of the aid to the railway which was given in another form and was of a modified character. But Mr. Blair proceeds as follows in the quotation that I am reading:

All the other considerations fell upon unheeding ears. All these dangers never struck our minds, never seemed to have entered into our calculations; it never occurred to us that we were under such imminent peril; it never was suggested by any one that the great future of Canada, the very life of Canada, was at stake, until the Grand Trunk Railway Company made a call and laid their proposition before my hon. friends and colleagues of the government.

That is Mr. Blair's statement of the position. But we have another statement from a gentleman who is still a member of the government, the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) who, in the 'Hansard' of 1903, page 8664, is reported as follows:

We had in the beginning one proposition, and to that proposition there was an alternative. The suggestion was made that we should assist the construction of a line from the end of the North Bay branch of the Grand Trunk Railway northward and around to the city of Winnipeg, and further westward to Fort William.

What was the Minister of the Interior speaking of, if not this proposal which