

who at a good deal of personal inconvenience visited the country to obtain the knowledge which was necessary to enable him, as a Minister of the Crown, to formulate his policy. Under the conviction that I owed it to Canada to do everything in my power to conduce to what I had come to the conclusion was absolutely essential to the best interests of Canada, I called upon the Hon. Mr. Sifton, Minister of the Interior, as soon as he returned to Victoria. I told that hon. gentleman the conclusion at which I had arrived. I told him that from the best information I could get from well qualified sources, I had come to the conclusion that there was one route, and one route alone, which in the first instance it was absolutely essential should be taken up by the Government and developed, and that was the route on the Stikine River, going from Telegraph Creek to Teslin Lake and thence down by the waters. I pressed that upon him very strongly, with a view of getting the earliest possible means of communication with Dawson City, because I had a discussion on the matter with Major Walsh, a very able officer in the service of the Government, as to the probability of his getting in, and knowing the difficulties he had to encounter, I believe it would take him a very long time. I told the Minister of the Interior that I believed it would be found practicable to send an ocean steamer to the mouth of the Stikine River when the ice had formed, and with horses and sleds and provisions and equipages of every kind, to go up on the ice to Glenora or some portion of the upper part of the Stikine River, and by a sled trail go down on the ice to Teslin Lake long before navigation would be open at all. I pressed on that hon. gentleman in the strongest and most emphatic manner I could his duty as Minister of the Crown to spare no effort to endeavour to accomplish a connection in that way. I told him I had interviewed the Government of British Columbia, and they had assured me they were prepared to co-operate with the Government of the Dominion in opening, in the first instance, in the absence of the railway, a sled trail, to be made into a trail as soon as the snow went off. I went further; I said to the Minister of the Interior: You heard me make a very strong speech last session on the floor of the Commons in opposition to Government aid to railways. I said: I am prepared to take it all back so far as this road is concerned. I said: I am so convinced of the vital importance to Canada of at once establishing a railway connection between the Stikine River and Teslin Lake that, so far as I am able to judge, if you will take the scheme up vigorously and put it through at once as a Government work—I believe you will have the hearty support of the Parliament of Canada and the people of Canada

as well. I believe now that the importance of that work cannot be overrated, and I will tell you why. Every one who has paid any attention to this subject knows that although the loss of life has been comparatively small, yet the sufferings of those going to the Klondike have been intense, and the destruction of horses which have died by the thousands on these Chilkoot and White Passes was a perfect disgrace, and attracted a great deal of attention. But what was more. I felt that as the Government of the United States claimed the territory over some fifteen or sixteen miles on both of these passes, they were in a position to offer such obstruction, and they did offer such obstruction, to Canadian enterprise and Canadian energy as to make it vitally important that an all-Canadian route should be obtained. So that, instead of having to go on any territory claimed by the United States, they should be able to go from Victoria, Vancouver or any other part of Canada into that country without touching American territory at all. I may have overrated the importance of it, though I do not think I did. But I felt it my duty as a public man to take the position I did; because there are some questions that are higher than party. Of course, from a party point of view it is desirable that the Government should make all the mistakes they will; but when it comes to be a question between Seattle or San Francisco being the base of supplies for all the thousands of people that will go into the Canadian Yukon territory instead of Canada, I say it becomes a matter of the most vital importance to the whole country. Under these circumstances I pressed on the hon. Minister of the Interior the importance of using the best means in his power to secure the end in view. The paper to which I refer, the "World" newspaper, had brought out, perhaps through some espionage—no, it could not be that, because the statement was false. It stated that I had an interview with Mr. Mann and Mr. Mackenzie in Vancouver. I met Mr. Mackenzie in the train. I met Mr. Mann in the public hall of the Vancouver Hotel. He never was in my room; I never was in his; I never had an interview with him or with Mr. Mackenzie; and when that contract was signed and sealed, I was as ignorant of it as any man in this House. When it was made public by the papers in Montreal, I happened to be there on business—and my hon. friends behind me know pretty well what that business was. I certainly did not know that anything of the kind was going on. After coming back here I called on the Minister of the Interior and asked him what prospect there was of getting this sledge road through at once, because unless the work was done at once the ice would be gone and the opportunity would be lost. The hon. gentleman told me that he was not in a position to inform me, because it was a