

However, being there, they must endeavour to take a proper view of the question before them, and he must say that he thought, considering its gravity, that the debate had not been altogether of that character which was desirable. He had heard some very fine rhetorical flourishes, and a very great deal of sophistry, and the concluding remarks of the last speaker (Hon. Mr. Cameron) were not such as they would like to hear in a discussion of this kind. It would be their duty, he thought, to set aside those flourishes and the cobwebs of sophistry, and get down to the substratum of facts.

When they came to look to the question as it stood before them, they found they had first to criticise the course of the Ministers with reference to prorogation, which, as well as the other matters, took place before Prince Edward Island was represented in this House. This question of prorogation had been so fully discussed by hon. members on both sides, that it was quite unnecessary for one to say anything in the matter further than to remark that prorogation was unquestionably the prerogative of His Excellency, and the House had nothing to do but submit to it. But when the First Minister declared that no business was to be done upon that occasion, and that the meeting was only to be *pro forma*, that declaration must have been upon his own responsibility, and not the declaration of His Excellency.

His Excellency had no power to dictate to the House what it should do. He had the power of prorogation, but when Parliament was met, he had no power to say whether it should be for business or whether it should not. The Minister must therefore assume the entire responsibility of that statement. It might be quite true, as was stated by the First Minister, that he had declared that when Parliament met on the 13th of August, it would be merely a *pro forma* meeting, but such a statement was not binding on the House unless there was an express resolution of Parliament declaring that such was to be the case, and he failed to see that there was any such resolution. Had it been the will of His Excellency that Parliament should be prorogued on the 13th of August, considering the state of public affairs, it would have been the duty of the Ministers to have called Parliament at some time previous to that date, so that this matter could have been disposed of. It was his opinion that the question of prorogation was one which they were not called upon to consider. It seemed rather strange, however, that when Parliament did meet on the 13th, the only business which the First Minister had promised to the House that is, the report of the Committee, was not preferred. The House met to have that report; no report was presented, and no report was read.

With regard to the question which arose from the proceedings out of Parliament, that is, the appointment of the Royal Commission, he considered that Parliament had a right to continue and conclude its own investigation. (*Cheers.*) It might be well to charge Commissions with examination into the conduct of officers under the Government, when charges are brought against them, but when the charges were brought against the Ministers themselves, he believed the proper place to conduct the investigation was the High Court of Parliament. (*Loud and prolonged cheers.*)

From what would appear from the proceedings, it was clear that when the House consented to the adjournment of Parliament to the 13th of August, it was upon the understanding that the charges would be entirely disposed of by the Committee, but it was well known to the Ministers that after the proceedings of the 2nd of July, this could not be done. From this, and the publication of these documents in the interval, after that committee had proved abortive, it seemed to him that it would have been well if the Ministers had given information to members that when Parliament met on the 13th the whole matter would come up for discussion and adjustment (*loud cheers*); and if thought necessary no doubt His Excellency would have changed the day of prorogation, but, as he understood it, there was no opportunity upon that occasion for an expression of the will of the members on the subject, their deliberations having been cut short by the appearance of the Black Rod.

The difficulty raised about the administration of oaths to witnesses before a Committee of this House, caused by the disallowance of the Oaths Bill, might have been got over by a special provision for the creation of Commissioners expressly for that purpose recommended or approved of by the House. Then the whole proceeding would have had—as it ought to have had—the sanction of Parliament. (*Loud cheers.*)

The circumstances were completely changed between the 2nd of July and the 13th of August, and the Ministry ought to have also changed their programme in reference to the investigation. The facts disclosed before the Commission were before the House in the blue book, and certainly the disclosures were neither few nor creditable. (*Cheers.*) He loathed the sight of that book. (*Loud cheers.*) They found from that book that in the autumn of 1871 Hon. Sir Francis Hincks, the then Minister of Finance, had recommended to Sir Hugh Allan a number of American gentlemen, who proposed to form a Company, and it was shown from the evidence that if the Minister of Finance had not urged the matter upon him, Sir Hugh Allan would have had nothing to do with the undertaking. (*Cheers.*) It had been contended that the Government were quite unaware of Sir Hugh's connection with the Americans, but how did he meet these gentlemen? At an interview with the Ministry. (*Cheers.*) Thus far, at least, the Government were aware that negotiations were pending between Sir Hugh Allan and these gentlemen. It was stated in this House that the Government heard no more of them but it was found that Sir Hugh Allan stated in his evidence that during the session of 1872 the Government were aware of these negotiations, although it was not contended that they had ever seen the agreement.

Sir Hugh Allan was encouraged by the Government to proceed, and in the December of the same year it was found that he had made arrangements with his American associates, at New York, at which certain shares were set down, as taken and certain names were given, and it was rather an extraordinary coincidence that the amount of both land and money grants which appeared in the Royal Charter were the very same as that agreed upon at that meeting in New York. (*Cheers.*) He pointed out that the percentage of the