

convince it that it is necessary for us to establish, as soon as possible, railway communication with these western regions. No question requiring solution at our hands presents greater difficulty than this one. In engaging in this gigantic enterprise, we have contracted obligations which are in themselves enormous and almost inconceivable when we compare them with our resources; nevertheless, in view of the fact that advantages of direct communication with the Pacific will, to an equal degree, be very great in my opinion, it will be important to proceed gradually towards the realization of this project and to unite in the execution of it firmness with prudence, and this, furthermore, has been done in fact by the present Government. The next paragraph informs us that a Bill concerning the independence of Parliament will be submitted to the House. It is clear, owing to what has occurred during the past two years, that certain portions of the existing Statute have become quite vicious, and nothing proves this more conclusively than the fact at present stated that a very great number of the members of this House have violated the provisions of this Act, not only without the intention of doing so on their part, but also without any suspicion on their part that they had contravened the law, incurring thereby a ruinous penalty without actual benefit. The House will, I trust, receive favourably every proposition having for its object the maintenance of the independence of Parliament, while at the same time it clearly defines the precise limit existing between the privileges of Parliament and those of members, and provides for the severe and reasonable punishment of any member guilty of an infraction of the law. By new legislation touching the means for the hastening of the settlement of the North-West Territories, the Government proves that it desires to draw an immediate advantage from the late visit of His Excellency to that portion of the country. This work is not yet finished, but we have the experience of other colonies to guide us in the enactment of such laws. In the last paragraph, His Excellency expresses the hope that the abundant crop with

which Providence has favoured us will contribute greatly to the restoration of the well-being and prosperity of this country. The commercial depression which during several years has afflicted Canada is not limited to this country only, but is a common evil which we unfortunately share with other countries more advanced and more rich than our own. Besides, Canada, owing to its geographical position, could not avoid experiencing the shock of the crisis which at the time prevailed among our neighbours. I consider that, if we wish to discover the true cause of this great commercial crisis, we will find that it had its origin in that period of extravagance, excitement and recklessness which followed the American War, and to these foreign and inevitable causes were united others more immediate in their nature. It is an incontestable fact that our importations and the products of our manufactures have largely exceeded the wants of the country. These importations and this excess of production distributed throughout the country had the double effect of seducing from agricultural pursuits and launching out into commercial affairs a large number of people who abandoned their patrimony, and of introducing amongst us a credit system which equally ruins the trader and the consumer. Here are to be found the true causes of our commercial misfortunes. It is to be regretted that the Opposition, in place of aiding the Government to diminish the effects of this system, has sought to render the Administration responsible for this state of things. The members sitting on the other side of the House know better than any one else in what position the present Ministry found itself on assuming the reins of power. They are well aware what a burdensome heritage they have bequeathed to their successors—consisting of contracted obligations and questions difficult of solution. To have given their assistance towards emergence from these difficulties would only have been just, but, far from adopting this course, the Opposition has sought to compel the Government to bear the responsibility of a situation which it had not created. Obligated to pass through a financial