

Now, I would like to know if there is one hon. gentleman who sits behind the ministers who will dare to go before his constituents next year and justify or excuse that contract. I do not ask what they will do here, no doubt they will vote that it was all right; but I ask, does any hon. gentleman feel in his heart that he will be prepared to go before his constituents next year and justify or excuse the government for entering into such an agreement as that with a bankrupt company dry on the rocks, with not a dollar to bless itself with, in connection with the greatest bridge in this world, costing millions? And that was done by the Finance Minister as perhaps he would buy a horse or a cow in a hurry. I think probably he would take more trouble in getting an estimate of the value of the horse or the character of its owner. The only explanation I can see is, that this contract was one characteristic of this government—it was a deal with a middleman. Every business consideration would have led the government to undertake that work themselves, to see to the financing of it, to keep control of it until the end, and then to operate it as the great connecting link between all the railways centering in the great city of Quebec. But no; the middleman had to be satisfied, and he was satisfied to all intents and purposes.

One would have thought that Mr. Parent had enough on his hands, as president of the bridge company, in looking after that immense work. One would have thought that the right hon. the leader of the government (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) would have been content with what he had done for his friend, but the right hon. gentleman was not content. Not considering whether Mr. Parent had more to do, in watching and supervising the construction of that bridge, than he was able to perform, the First Minister coolly appointed him Chairman of the Transcontinental Railway Commission, with the handsome snug salary of \$8,000 a year. We have heard of certain gentlemen having a pull, but Mr. Parent evidently had a great pull somewhere.

It may be interesting perhaps to show what a nice thing this Chairmanship of the Transcontinental Commission is. We can gather a pretty fair idea of it by looking at the Auditor General's Report for the nine months' expenditure to the 31st March last. We find that these Commissioners have obtained an official car, and in connection with that official car the people have had to pay during those nine months \$13,026.21. The details are given in the Auditor General's Report, page W—283. They started off by getting a car from the Railway Department for \$8,000. That car, of course, being only fitted for an ordinary mortal, or perhaps for a minister of railways, must be fixed up. It was remodelled and refitted at a cost of

\$1,400. Then they paid \$290.50 for dishes, tea cups and saucers, &c. They also bought for the car table linen, bedding, carpets and sundry articles, \$1,673.90. They did more. They had their bedsteads, but they wanted mattresses. They got hair mattresses and they had mattresses remade and they got a large chair and some folding tables and mahogany cabinets, and for all these they paid \$393.95. But they were still not satisfied. They wanted the porter of the car to be properly fitted up to represent them at the back door, so they got a cap for the porter. What do you suppose they paid for it? \$5. It was not a silk hat.

Mr. NORTHRUP. A night cap.

Mr. BARKER. That would pay for a good many night caps. It is a cap for the porter, and it cost \$5. I shall not go through all the items, for there are too many, but they all foot up to \$13,096.21. You can understand what a nice position Mr. Parent has, and I wonder if he had similar comforts in connection with the bridge company. At all events, he gets \$8,000 a year for presiding as Commissioner in connection with the Transcontinental, and the Lord only knows what he gets in connection with the bridge company.

The entering into such a contract as I have described was indefensible, but that is not the most serious part of the matter, because that meant simply money. Section 12 of the agreement is in these words:

The plans and specifications for all the work to be undertaken shall be submitted to and approved by the Governor in Council, and the said undertaking shall be completed not later than the 1st December, 1906.

By section 14 the government have the right to appoint three directors of the bridge company. You will observe, Mr. Speaker, that the contracting party, the one who puts stipulations of that kind into a contract, assumes an obligation to those he represents. By inserting those provisions in the contract the government assumed a very responsible duty towards the people. They took an important power. As between the government and the people, that contract imposed on the government the obligation, not merely to make sure that the plans were all that they ought to be, but that hour by hour and day by day, during the construction of that work, there should be experts on the bridge to see that the plans or specifications were not in the slightest degree shirked and that everything was done which the builders of the bridge had contracted to do. Not only that, they should have had an expert there who, when he saw from time to time, in the course of the work, that modifications might be necessary, would be competent to advise the government and have those changes made. There