

left here after the session of 1897, after this House closed, there was no information in the possession of the House which justified the Government in assuming that what was said might happen, would in reality happen. There was some information in the hands of the House and some in my hands. My hon. friend the leader of the Opposition undertook last session to show me that we did not have sufficient information, and he took up Mr. Ogilvie's report, which was in my hands when the House prorogued, saying there was going to be, in all probability, an influx of population into this district. I would point out to the hon. gentleman (Sir Charles Tupper), that neither he nor any member of this House can read that report and say that the meaning of it is other than simply this: That Mr. Ogilvie thought there would be an influx of a few hundred miners from the Alaskan side of the boundary. Well, that did not call for any enormous activity on the part of the Government; it did not call for anything I had not done long before in sending Mr. Fawcett and staff to the Yukon district. But immediately afterwards events began to thicken, and it became evident that something more had to be done. My right hon. friend the leader of the Government was in England, and other members of the Government were away, some of them attending the Queen's Jubilee. Other members of the Government were here, including the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir Richard Cartwright), who gave the matter careful attention. And I wish to say here, that I have been most indebted to that hon. gentleman (Sir Richard Cartwright), in connection with all matters relating to the Yukon, with reference to which I wanted to apply for advice to one of more experience than myself. The Minister of Trade and Commerce was here, we held various council meetings, and we discussed the matter. In the first place, we ordered up an additional number of Mounted Police. We sent the assistant commissioner of the Mounted Police. We did not want the job for a Grit; we might have done that; I am not sure the hon. gentlemen opposite would not have sent one of their political friends had they been in my place; but we sent the assistant commissioner of the Mounted Police as being the proper man for the purpose, and we sent him upon the recommendation of the Controller of the Mounted Police. We sent him to Skagway to forward supplies over the pass. Then, as the season proceeded the idea forced itself upon our minds that there was going to be a greater rush of people than we at first anticipated. We held council meetings, we discussed the matter fully, and the judgment of the members of the Government who were here was that the proper course for us to pursue was to appoint what might be called an emergency staff of officers, that they might go up there, that they might meet the immediate re-

quirements of the situation in the following summer (that would be last summer), and report to us what was necessary in connection with the permanent organization of the district. That was the judgment of the members of the Government at that time, and we followed that plan. Let me say, Sir, it is easy to be wise; it is easy to say what you would not have done if you had known beforehand something you did not know—if we knew what the price of wheat was going to be a month from now we might all be millionaires—but we do not know, and so we have to depend on our judgment as to what is going to happen. When we held these council meetings we knew hardly anything about the Yukon district except what was contained in Mr. Ogilvie's report. This report gave a lot of general information, but immediately a man begins to administer, immediately a man begins to decide, he says: What about this, what about that, what about the other thing. We had nobody to tell us, there was not a man in Canada that knew anything about it; there was not an officer in the Mounted Police who had ever been there. Mr. Ogilvie was at Dawson city under permission to come out—either in Dawson City or on his way out—and we did not have any information whatever, except, as I said, what was contained in that report. It was valuable so far as it went, but there were an enormous number of things that we wanted to know and that we did not know, and that we could not get any information about.

Well, we appointed this staff of officers, and I want to call the attention of the House to the fact that when we took these steps we were generally commended by, not only our friends in the country, and not only our own press, but the press on the other side of politics. Everybody commended the promptness of the steps we had taken to cope with the situation. There were two things to which our attention was specially directed; one was the question of food. Everybody knows here that there was the most dire alarm as to what was going to happen in that district during the winter. Every one knows that there was the greatest apprehension. Why, Sir, I received telegrams from clergymen, telegrams and letters from people all over the country, privately urging me to be sure to leave no stone unturned to prevent anything in the nature of famine or distress in that country. People wrote to me who had relatives, or thought they had relatives in that district, and that was one of the matters to which the attention of the Government was directed.

Again, there was another matter which we had to consider. The population that was going in there was supposed to be a lawless population. It was known to be composed in the proportion of 91 per cent of foreigners, largely of Americans from the Pacific slope, not the class of men who are

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