

the emergency plea which my hon. friend the Secretary of State offered this House the other day for this extraordinary contract will not hold water at all. There is no foundation for it. They had all this information long before parliament rose last year, and what did they do? They passed these mining regulations which have been condemned and condemned very properly all over the country—regulations that they have been patching and changing from time to time ever since. They passed these regulations, and that is absolutely about all they did until within a very recent period. The whole world was talking Klondike long before the House rose in June or July last, and people were moving from almost every part of the habitable world in that direction, and yet the government were oblivious of all this, and, instead of attending to their duty they went up and down in the country and out of the country junketting east and west, revelling, and having a good time, and did not awake to the importance of this great question until a few weeks ago, and then they spring this extravagant, extraordinary bargain which they propose to make with Mackenzie and Mann, and they come to the House in the person of my hon. friend, the Secretary of State, and say it is a great emergency. "We found ourselves confronted with a great emergency and we have to do the very best we can." In discussing this question in the House hon. gentlemen appear to have placed particular stress, particular reliance upon what we would call whispered arguments. They could not give us just such information as would settle everything in our minds at once; they had some valuable information in their minds and possession that they could scarcely whisper themselves, but if we only knew what they knew, the diplomatic reasons and the diplomatic forces that were at work, we would be willing to swallow the contract as they have swallowed it. That is the burden of the statement made by the two members of the government in this House. I have looked over the question as carefully as I am able to do, and I must say that I entirely concur with the observations of my hon. friend from Brandon in reply to my hon. friend the leader of the House, when he said he could see nothing substantial in these whispered arguments which the members of the government had been giving in the House, with regard to diplomatic diffi-

culties that surround this question. I cannot imagine that there are any diplomatic troubles in the matter but which are on the face of it, which we all can see, and which the people of the United States and Canada are studying just as well as the gentlemen in the government are studying them at the present moment. It is possible there are some, but the man who is looking on can see as far into a millstone as the man who is picking it. We have all the advantages possessed by the hon. gentlemen opposite, or nearly all. They may get sometimes a day or two ahead of us, but such is the rapidity with which news is carried that the public will soon overtake them on any such questions as this. The hon. Secretary of State spoke of the difficulty on account of this strip of United States territory at the head of Lynn Canal which interposes between the open waters of the Lynn Canal and British territory, and I asked the hon. gentleman if he had applied for permission to go over that strip with a railway, and he said, No, we have not. The telegrams from Washington last Saturday say that the United States government have applied for permission to build railways into our territory and that it has been refused. That is the statement which comes from Washington. I can therefore very well understand that if the government have refused the Americans permission to locate railways in our part of that northern country, the Americans would naturally refuse to give us similar facilities. I can very well understand that the members of the government having refused such permission would not be very likely to go and ask the United States for permission in the same direction.

Hon. Mr. BOULTON—That only brings into prominence the fact that it is not a Canadian route—not an all-Canadian route.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—I have just mentioned the answer I received from my hon. friend the Secretary of State and the reply that he gave and the statements that are telegraphed from Washington, which we have in the newspapers, that permission has been refused to the Americans to build a railway into our territory, and consequently it is all the more likely that our government would not apply after having given such a refusal. For my own part I admit there are difficulties in this coast strip.