

2. It is hardly necessary that I should make any remarks on their reply.

I reassert the opinion which I expressed in my Despatch of the 25th February,* that among the nominal supporters of the Bill, there was not that consensus of opinion in favour of the sale of the railway which the numbers alone who voted for it might lead one to think. I also reassert the statement that I made in the same despatch, that the supporters of the party had been informed that the Colony could not meet its engagements unless the proposals in the contract were accepted. I learnt this on the 24th February before the Receiver-General had informed the House of Assembly that the rejection of the contract meant "Confederation or a Crown Colony." The argument is the same, and, even if I had not heard that such was the case, it is hardly probable that an argument which was thus used in public had not been used at an earlier date in private.

3. I did not state in my Despatch of 2nd March† that "greater weight was to be given to the utterances of a clerical paper (Methodist), or to the opinion of the Bishop of St. John's (Roman Catholic), than to the opinion of men of business"; but I pointed out that such utterances showed that among educated and non-party men there was wanting that consensus of opinion which my Ministers still think exists in favour of the contract.

As to the Bishop's letter, I should have declined to produce it if it had been asked for, but as it was not asked for, "I did not decline to let Ministers see it."

4. I made no imputation against Mr. Morris. Any one with any experience is aware that a Member has to consider the interests of his constituents when dealing with a question of great importance to them, Mr. Morine stating in his speech "that it would result in the utmost benefit to the people of St. John's West."

5. I was in error in stating that of the five members of the Opposition who voted for the contract, three sat for St. John's West; two of them did so sit and vote. I made a mistake as to the third, there being two members of the same name—but with a slight difference in the spelling; one voted for, and the other, who sits for St. John's West, against the Bill.

6. As to the Opposition protest, I have only to observe as regards the proceedings of the Legislature, which are referred to in the 2nd paragraph of the reply to the memorial of the Opposition party, that the fact is that except upon the resolutions there was practically no discussion in the House of Assembly on the merits of the contract.

7. On Tuesday, February 22nd, Sir James Winter moved and explained the resolutions in a committee of the whole House. Mr. Bond asked for time to consider the contract till Friday the 25th. Sir James Winter agreed to give till Thursday the 24th. On that day a debate commenced which terminated the next day, when a division took place, no one speaking on the Ministerialist side except Sir James Winter and Mr. Morine.

8. On the afternoon of Thursday, the 3rd March, immediately after I had signed the contract, the Bill to carry the contract into effect was introduced by Sir James Winter. The Bill passed rapidly, in less than an hour, through all its stages that afternoon, and on the same afternoon it was sent up to the Legislative Council and there read a first time. It was read a second time on the 4th, and on Monday, the 7th March, it passed through Committee, and was read a third time without a division. The Honble. Mr. Knowling was the only Member who spoke against it.

I have, &c.,

H. MURRAY,

Governor.

Enclosure in No. 31.

*Certified Copy of Minutes of the Honourable Executive Council approved by
His Excellency the Governor on the 30th April, 1898.*

30th April, 1898.

Resolved,—That His Excellency the Governor be respectfully requested to transmit the accompanying Minute of the Committee of Council to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

J. ALEX. ROBINSON,
Colonial Secretary.