

Some of the gentlemen who have spoken, I won't tax my memory as to which of them, have made the constitutional objection that the House never agreed to the prorogation on the 13th of August. Sir, the House had nothing to do with it. It is not a matter of agreement between the Sovereign and the people; it is a matter of prerogative. Did any educated man, any man who knows what the Constitution in Canada or what the Constitution in England is, believe that I, the First Minister of the Crown, could get up in my place and tell this House that on the 13th August it would be prorogued, and that on that day there was no real necessity for members being present, because it was to be merely a formal meeting? That I, a Minister of nearly twenty years standing—*(hear)*—who ought to know by practice, and do know by study, somewhat of the British Constitution, should make that announcement unless I had got the authority of my master; had got the sanction of the Crown?

As a matter of course, as his Excellency has stated in the answer he made to the gentlemen who waited upon him, I submitted the proposition to his Excellency and took his pleasure upon it, just as the First Minister in England would take the pleasure of her Majesty as to the day on which prorogation was to take place. I got the sanction of his Excellency the Governor General to make that statement, and if I had not got that sanction I do not believe the House would have agreed to the long adjournment. *(Hear, hear.)* Why, there was a protest made by my hon. friend from Cariboo (Mr. Thompson) on that point, and there was a general feeling in the House. There was an obvious and universal feeling, and there was no objection made to it, that it was quite absurd to suppose that we would return in midsummer, after a winter session from all parts of the country for the purpose of receiving the report of this Committee. *(Hear, hear.)*

I made that statement to this House and every hon. member, the hon. gentleman at all events on the front benches, the hon. gentlemen who hope, and perhaps will succeed in their hope, to take positions where they will be responsible for carrying on the Government under constitutional principles, could not have supposed that I would venture, as the first Minister here, to make a statement to Parliament that it would be prorogued on a particular day, unless I had the sanction of the Crown for making such statement. *(Cheers.)* That sanction I sought and that sanction I obtained.

We will look back for a moment to see whether I was right, whether the Government was right—in speaking of myself I speak of myself and my colleagues—whether we ought to receive the sanction of the House in giving that advice. Let us look back to the circumstances of the case. I invite the careful attention of the House, and especially the attention of those hon. members who were not members of the Parliament of Canada at that time, to the circumstances of the case.

In February, I think it was, there was a Royal Charter given for the purpose of building a Pacific Railway, to the Pacific Railway Company. They went home,—their President Sir Hugh Allan and certain other members of the Board—for the purpose of attempting

to carry out this charter which had been given to them. The charter had been given to them according to the vote of the Parliament of Canada, and every clause of it was in accordance with the provisions of the law passed by the Parliament of Canada. *(Cheers.)* These gentlemen had gone home to England to lay a great scheme, so great a scheme, Mr. Speaker, that some of the hon. gentlemen opposite said that it was going to over tax our resources and destroy our credit, and that they could not succeed at all with so small a population in such a young country. They had gone home to England to lay the project before the English world and European capitalists. They were going there to operate, and it depended much on the support they received from this country, from the Parliament and press of Canada, whether they could succeed or not. They had gone home in February.

Parliament met early in March, I think. The hon. member for Shefford rose in his place and made his charge against the Government on the 2nd of April. The hon. gentleman may have been, I do not say he was not, actuated by principles of fine patriotism in making that charge; but whether he was so actuated or not, whether his motives were parliamentary or unparliamentary, patriotic or unpatriotic, one thing is certain, that the direct aim, the direct object, the point at which that motion and that statement were directed, was to kill the charter in England. *(Cheers.)* The weapon was aimed with that object, not so much with the desire of destroying the Administration, not so much with the purpose of casting a reflection upon the Ministry, as with the view of destroying that first on the expectation that the Ministry would fall afterwards. That was the aim; there was no doubt about it, and when the hon. gentleman's motion was defeated, and when I took up the resolution the aim was well intended—the desire of killing was well intended—but it failed in the execution. *(Hear, hear.)*

When I took it up I considered the whole position of events. Sir Hugh Allan and those connected with him went to England in March. Parliament was sitting at the time the hon. gentleman made his motion. I could not know how long Parliament would last, and the chances were that they would return some time before the end of the session. If they did not return then, of course I considered that there could be no examination until they did, but I thought they might return. I declare that I never for a moment supposed that the hon. member when he made his statement, could be guilty of such great, such palpable, such obvious injustice, as to press his Committee in the absence of Sir Hugh Allan, Mr. Abbott and Sir George-É. Cartier, when they had no opportunity of defending either themselves or the charter which they had obtained.

The House must remember also that the motion made by the hon. gentleman went much further than my motion. The motion of the hon. member, which he moved on the 2nd of April, was not only to inquire into the facts that he mentioned, the statements upon which he based his motion, but to go into the whole of the subject connected with the charter and the granting of the charter to the Pacific Railway Company. The aim of his motion was to destroy that charter.