

greatest consequence to the country at large, and it is one which should be approached in a calm and judicious spirit for the purpose of ascertaining, as far as we possibly can, what is best for the interests of the country, and when we have arrived at that conclusion, of proceeding at once to act in accordance with the conclusions at which we have arrived. I think the House will agree that the Government deserve great credit for the active measures adopted by them to have law and order administered in the Yukon district, because a new problem had to be solved. A tremendous number of people had gone in there during last year, and a very large number are going in this year, and something had to be done for the purpose of maintaining law and order in that country, and the Government deserve the thanks of the people for the prompt and hearty way in which they looked into and dealt with that matter, a result particularly due to the Minister of the Interior and his actions in that connection. We have a new development in this country, which, as I have said, is a matter of very great importance indeed. Although of course there is no way of arriving at the actual figures, yet it is estimated on somewhat good authority that from fifty thousand people to two hundred and fifty thousand will be wending their way to the Klondike territory during the year 1898. Whether that be the case or not it is difficult to say, but one fact is generally agreed upon, and that is, that there will be a tremendous rush of population into that district. If 100,000 people go to our mining regions this year, the volume of business that will be developed will surpass anything before experienced in Canada. It is, therefore, a matter of very great consequence to our whole people that active measures should be immediately taken to secure to Canadians the enormous trade which will follow in the wake of this great influx of people.

Now, Sir, what has been going on during the last few months? We have seen a struggle, waging for some time past in order to secure that trade. I do not blame the people of the United States for doing everything in their power to secure the commerce of that region, and if they have advantages which in some respects we do not possess on account of our having to pass over American territory to enter the Yukon district, I do not blame the Americans for availing of these advantages to the utmost extent of their power. On the other hand the people of Canada are most anxious that steps should be taken to secure this trade for them. That is the idea that is dominant in the minds of our people at the present time. They believe that every effort should be put forth to secure that the trade of the Yukon should be turned to the profit of Canadians, and not to the enrichment of the people of the United States. We have the great difficulty to contend with at the

present moment that our own country is almost inaccessible through our own territory, and our people on their journey to the Klondike are submitted to many inconveniences such as the imposition of duties on goods purchased in Canada. The problem was one which our Government had to deal with and to deal with at once, because time is the essence of everything, and in my humble judgment we could not afford to allow even one year to pass. We all know that when trade runs in a certain channel at the commencement, it is likely to develop in that channel and it is a work of great difficulty to divert it afterwards. I say, Sir, that it is the first duty of our Government to secure that the trade of the Klondike should pass through its natural channel, through Canadian territory, so that we may reap the advantage of it.

Another important consideration has to be taken into account. We all know that mining booms do not last for ever, and although I have no desire to reflect upon the reports made by any one, yet we have no right to suppose that everything said regarding that territory will be found to be absolutely true. Each one who runs in quest of gold does not find it, and there can hardly be a doubt that a great number of people who go to the Klondike will be disappointed. During the past year thousands have been wending their way with supplies, over the mountains and through the passes of that region, and when that number is increased by a further fifty thousand people, or perhaps a hundred thousand, it is absolutely necessary that provision should be made to enable large numbers to get out of the country rapidly and safely. If there was not a means provided of enabling people to return, there would to my mind be very great danger of disaster befalling a large number of the people, should they be unable to return if things do not turn out as they expect. It is therefore well that our Government should consider this particular phase of the question. I need not dwell upon the great necessity for a railroad into that country over Canadian territory, nor need I dwell upon the vast advantages which the people of Canada will derive from securing the Klondike trade; these are facts that are patent to all. There is no difference of opinion upon these points, and therefore I will not dwell at greater length upon them.

I shall now proceed to deal with a subject upon which perhaps there may be a difference of opinion, and in respect to which a course might be taken which the people and the Parliament of this country would not endorse. Under ordinary circumstances, I believe it is the duty of every government to consult Parliament before entering into any large contract at any particular time. That, I believe, is a principle which should at all times be held to be sound, and I have no desire to withdraw from it. But at the same time, if circumstances arise which