

debtedness. I watched anxiously to see if that statement would be repeated by the hon. the Minister of Finance, but it was not. And I think he is a much better authority than the hon. member for Cumberland. I affirm what the hon. gentleman has practically admitted that the increased expenditure during our Administration, resulted from carrying on public works, the responsibility of which was assumed and undertaken by hon. gentlemen themselves. We find the hon. the Finance Minister himself, in 1873 stating: Here is \$60,000,000 of liability, the hon. gentleman's speeches at that time state, was assumed by their own Government. The Government changed a few months after this. Its obligations were transferred from them to us. It was our duty as far as possible, to carry out these works in good faith, with the resources at our command. In discussing this subject, many important events in the history of the country are recalled. Let us consult the *Debates* of 1871, when the scheme for the entrance of British Columbia into the Confederation was under discussion. What caused did hon. gentlemen, then as now in Opposition, take when this scheme was presented to the House. The hon. member for Lambton (Mr. Mackenzie), the hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake), and several hon. members then and now in the House, raised their voice against the assumption of this terrible and insane liability of building the Pacific Railway in twelve years. I must, in justification to myself, refer to some observations I made at that time on that subject. It would be interesting for hon. gentlemen, when it is charged that the late Government was responsible for embarrassing this country with an enormous debt in connection with the construction of the Pacific Railway, to read the speeches made at that time. I said, Sir :

"There were two very important considerations—one was that there was a great departure from the principles of the Constitution in the matter of the representation. With regard to the financial aspect, however, he could not but believe that lasting injury would be done to the country by the expenditure to be incurred. The cost of the railway could not be less than \$100,000,000, and it was equivalent to the Imperial Government asking England to embark in an enterprise involving a thousand millions. Was not the matter, therefore, sufficiently grave to merit the most seri-

ous consideration—and he entreated the Government to pause. The faith of the Government was pledged by the resolution to complete the railway within ten years, no matter if the result should be ruin. No verbal reservation could have effect, the written record alone could hold, and the words of the resolution were clear, and if, in two years, the railway was not commenced, British Columbia could appeal to the Imperial Government. They had been told that the expenditure would not burden the people; but could that be believed, and no one would undertake to say that a company would undertake the work as a remunerative scheme, and, therefore, sooner or later, the Government would have to pay every dollar of the expense, and the contractors would want the land as a profit. No one could suppose that even after the road was built, it would pay one-tenth of its working expenses, and how, therefore, could British capitalists be expected to undertake the work. The hon. the Minister of Customs had intimated that if they did not strike quickly they would alienate British Columbia from the enterprise; but was that an element for discussion? No. If such were the case, the matter belonged to the Imperial Government only. Was the House ready to involve the country in so large an increase of debt? That debt was already \$100,000,000, and there were many burdens that would arise from the Intercolonial and other works. The Union Act had provided for the extension of the Court system, and that had only been delayed because of the deficient state of the finances of the Dominion. The cost of the railway could not be named, it might be much greater than the amount named, and yet *coûte que coûte* the country would stand pledged to complete it. He should oppose the measure because it would impose burdens on the people that they were not able to bear, and would involve the country in ruin and disaster."

It is not fair, it is unjust, it is not treating their opponents with fair consideration to charge upon them the responsibility for the indebtedness of this country, as the hon. member from Cumberland has done. This Pacific Railway policy has been an incubus upon the country ever since it was initiated. When we came into power there is no doubt we felt called upon to maintain and support the public faith of the country as far as possible. Hon. gentlemen who composed the late Government opposed this railway scheme at its inception, but, inasmuch as the faith of the country was pledged to its completion within ten or twelve years—though they felt this was absolutely impossible—they considered that to a certain extent it devolved upon them to carry out the Treaty engagements made with British Columbia, as far as they possibly could. But, Sir, what did we do? The