

repeatedly told him, that the value of the real estate on the books of the Harris company was under \$100,000, and that Mr. Robertson had held out, as an inducement for the bank to make advances, the almost absolute certainty of a sale being effected to the Intercolonial railway, which sale Mr. Robertson was exceedingly desirous of effecting.

#### Other Land Values.

Apart from this evidence, there was further proof of the value of land in the Harris property as shown by the purchases in recent years. Though the government paid \$200,000 for 216,000 feet of land, the Harris concern had bought 5,900 feet of the Hazen property for \$2,000, and 3,200 feet of the Wales property, with buildings, for \$1,000. These purchases were of recent date. Some years before 8,000 feet of Moore property had been purchased for \$3,000.

So much for the value of the land and the bargain the government made, which bargain Messrs. Hazen and McLeod defended with great zeal as a good investment. In the heat of the debate Mr. McLeod seems to have imagined the property to be even more valuable than had been claimed, for he asserted that the construction shop was of brick and within 15 or 17 feet of the railway wharf whereas it is a wooden building and several hundred feet away from any wharf.

The attack on the land job was led in parliament by Mr. Davies, who was followed by able speakers on the Liberal side. The defence by the Conservative side was made by the ministers and by Messrs. Hazen and McLeod. They failed to justify the government's act. The most memorable denunciation came not from the Liberals, but from Mr. Adams of Northumberland, a firm believer in the Conservative party, who had examined into the merits of the case and heard both sides. No attempt to explain the job could satisfy him. Here are some of the remarks he made:—

"I am quite clear that this property has been purchased for three times its value, beyond all question. \* \* \* I am not here simply because I am a Conservative, believing in and admiring the policy of the Conservatives party. I do not suppose there is a man who more fully believes in the Conservative party and its policy than I do. But if I have to vote in favor of grant of \$200,000 for the purchase of the Harris property in St. John, then I want to go back to my people and tender to them my resignation, saying to them: I cannot any longer represent you in an honest way,

and you must select some other man to carry out your ideas. I must do that before I can justify such a vote as my friends are trying to justify tonight.

"You are tonight committing a public crime against the people of our province. You are attempting to force an opinion on this legislature which is not true. There is no principle upon which it can be justified. You cannot produce any evidence to justify this legislature voting \$200,000 for the purchase of this property. No practical man, from the chief engineer down to any workman on the railway, will say it is required for the convenience of the railway or the public."

Later in the debate Mr. Adams further said:—

"The government must stand at the bar of public opinion to answer for their action. The very price paid for this land, stamps it as such that no man in the dominion, be he a minister or a citizen, can justify voting \$200,000 for the purpose. No Conservative, no Liberal, no Grit or Tory can justify it. That meanest Tory that sits here tonight can not put out his hand and state that the \$200,000 paid for this land is an equitable price, by reason of common sense, prudence or justice. It stands unparalleled in the history of purchases under any government. There can be no possible reason submitted in the presence of parliament or in the presence of any railway man in the country, to justify it."

This was all bad enough, but as regards the people of St. John, the matter was still more serious. Here are some of the results:—

The government took a property which it did not require, has not used, and cannot use without a very great additional expense.

In doing this it closed for all time the largest industry in St. John, an establishment which had been in operation for three-score years, and would have been in operation today. It turned a busy place into a heap of ruins and sent hundreds of workmen and their families out of the country.

The government, like a destroying army, swept away the whole work of years, leaving only dust, ashes and ruins. A scene of industry was blasted at its touch and became a desert.

And all this in order to consummate the notorious Harris land job, which even partizan zeal cannot successfully defend.

Is it any wonder that the narrative of what was done and how it was done has been entitled "The Story of a Crime?"