

that matter to the fullest extent, and it is a new doctrine to place before this House that because the government appoints a commission we are not to discuss the subject until the commission pleases to report upon it. What has become of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility? Under the old rule laid down by the members of the present government when they were in opposition, the ministry, no matter whether they had knowledge of it or not, were responsible if an accident happened. I had the charge laid often against me that because some official in my department, when I was Minister of Railways and Canals, had committed a wrong, had connived at a theft, or done something or other of that kind, the responsibility should be placed directly upon the minister who had in his employ such a person. Certainly that is the correct doctrine. The ministers are directly responsible, and upon them devolves the responsibility of showing how and why this catastrophe happened. When, in 1903, the right hon. Prime Minister brought down his scheme for the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway the completion of the Quebec bridge became an absolute necessity. We were all favourable to it. We gave all the powers to the government that were necessary for the purpose of acquiring the bridge. The government, previously to the passing of the Act, had entered into an agreement, which was embodied in the Act of parliament, vesting in them the control and management of the bridge. They had, first of all, to approve of the contract, they had to place the bridge under the supervision of an engineer and the control and management of the bridge were vested by Act of parliament in the government of the country. What are the facts of the case? As to the company, no imputation has been made as to the character of the individuals who compose it. My hon. friend from Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) has been accused of casting such an imputation upon them and the right hon. gentleman asks: What has he to say about Mr. Sharples? what has he to say about the late Mr. Dobell? He has never made an attack upon any individual at all. What he stated was that a bankrupt company which could not go on and build the bridge came to this House, and in saying this he only used the words of the hon. Finance Minister (Mr. Fielding), who stated so when he introduced the Bill. He stated that they were unable to go on and complete the undertaking and he was obliged to introduce this Bill to the House. What were the facts in reference to the bridge company? They had \$900,000 and they had \$60,000 alleged to have been paid in as subscriptions for the capital stock of the company. The \$900,000 was composed of contributions by the city of Quebec, the province of Quebec and the Dominion government. They sold their bonds or securities upon the un-

dertaking, which realized sixty per cent of their value. There was owing to the contractors who were building the bridge, \$700,000. The amount they had altogether realized was in the neighbourhood of \$900,000, and the indebtedness of the company when they came to this government was \$700,000. We agreed to guarantee bonds for the purpose of completing the bridge to the extent of nearly \$7,000,000. On what condition?—on the condition that the contract and plans should be approved by the government and that the control and management of the undertaking should be placed in the hands of the government from the day of the passage of the Act. It is true the company had a subsidiary interest in it under the agreement which was that after a certain amount was paid in the form of interest the residue belonged to the company. It is not at all probable that this agreement would ever result in anything being payable to the company. Virtually the absolute control and ownership of the bridge passed with the Act of 1903 to the government of this country. One of the conditions was that the bonds which had realized sixty per cent were to be supplemented by a paid up capital of \$200,000 for the purpose of making up the deficiency between the selling price and par value of the bonds. We have no means of knowing in what form that was done. Perhaps the contractor who was owed \$700,000 for his work on the foundation of the bridge would be very glad to subscribe \$200,000 for the purpose of getting in \$500,000 clear. Is there any one in this House who believes that the company itself, being a bankrupt company, and there being no possibility at all of any amount of money being returned to it, paid out of its own pockets \$200,000 in order to get \$500,000 from the government of the country to pay some contractor? Is there a possibility of it? Does the right hon. gentleman himself believe anything of the kind? The fact of the matter is that it enabled the contractor by subscribing to the capital stock, to obtain payment of the balance that was due him of \$700,000 less \$200,000 by entering into a scheme of that kind.

The effect of the agreement made with the government at the time was that the control and management of the affairs of the bridge was vested in the government owing to the advances made to the company. As to the ministerial responsibility in such cases, I have some recollection of arguments used by hon. gentlemen opposite and of inquiries that were made in reference to expenditures of that kind. I remember perfectly attacks that were made on us when we were on that side of the House upon such matters, in which it was stated that in the case of any expenditure by any official or any act by a company controlled by the government there was ministerial responsibility until the matter was explained. But now we are told that