

union with British Columbia and the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. With the solitary exception of Sir Hector Langevin, who had spent a few weeks there, not a single minister had ever set foot in British Columbia. I doubt when the Act was passed if there was a man on the Treasury Bench who so much as knew whether there was one range of mountains or three to be crossed before we could reach the Coast. As to the character of the road or its probable cost, we had not a scintilla of information. In proof of the extreme folly of the action of the Government on this occasion, I may add that a very few years later, being in London on public business, I met several of the leading British officials who had been administering the affairs of British Columbia at the time, and these gentlemen one and all assured me that they were astonished, as indeed they well might have been, at the terms Canada had offered. As to the construction of the road itself, Sir Stafford Northcote, who was the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and to whom I had applied to know whether, in view of the importance of obtaining an alternative route to India through British territory, he would not recommend the Imperial Government to guarantee the loans we might require to raise for that purpose, told me frankly, in so many words, that if our predecessors had asked for such a guarantee at the time they were proposing to take British Columbia into Confederation, it would have been granted. But he added that, as matters stood, having regard to the financial situation, it was impossible now to re-open the question, and that as we had acted without reference to the Imperial authorities, we must abide by the bargain we had made. Sir Stafford did not deny that we had taken a very heavy load on our shoulders, or that the route might be of great service to the Empire in certain contingencies, but, though I pressed him hard, I could not induce him to alter his decision.

REPORTER. This was but cold encouragement.

SIR RICHARD. Sir Stafford, as I well know, had his own difficulties to contend with and, in fact, Lord Salisbury, to whom, in his capacity of Secretary for India,