

consequence of the principle laid down ten years ago by the Government then in power, when they introduced the Canadian Pacific Railway scheme, and which was: that this railway should be built immediately and without interruption until its completion. It must be clear, from the remarks of the member for Richmond and Wolfe (Mr. Ives), with regard to the position of the two great parties, that, at the outset, the ground taken by the Conservative party was this: the railroad should be built immediately, and without interruption till finally completed; whereas the policy of the Liberals was that it should be built gradually as the wants of the country should require, and its resources permit. The reason urged by the leader of the Conservative party for the immediate completion of the road was, that it was a necessity of Confederation which would otherwise remain incomplete. If it was, it was not a necessity of Confederation as primarily established; nor was it a necessity that sprang from any natural cause. If it was, however, such a necessity, it is perhaps the severest commentary upon the policy followed some years ago of creating whole Provinces out of the wilderness, and of endowing them with all the institutions and luxuries with which Provinces with large populations must be supplied, while in these cases there was scarcely any population. Hon. gentlemen opposite will remember that they received ample warning not to create that state of things which would bind this country to the immediate completion of the road. They were reminded that if they did so they would be putting a burden on this country too heavy for its strength to bear; but they did not heed these warnings, they forced their followers to vote for this policy, and now, as a crowning consequence of that policy, their followers are asked to consent to the enormous sacrifices involved in this contract. If I recall these facts it is without any intention to recriminate. This is not the time of recrimination, it is the time of all others when every man should apply himself to discharging his duties to the best of his lights and conscience.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. Hear, hear.

Mr. LAURIER. If I recall these facts it is simply to say once more, if such evidence is necessary, that the great principles of a country are never to be trifled with; that the true principles which should guide the policy of a nation should never be deviated from, because, if once deviated from, the country will be led from consequence to consequence ending in a most fatal conclusion. In my humble judgment it was in 1871 a fault—I will not say it was a crime, though I might say without severity it was a political crime—at all events it was a fault to bind this country to the immediate construction of the road. It was a fault, last Session, after the experience of the previous ten years to persist in that policy. It was a fault, not then to have adopted the policy suggested by the hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake) of commencing in the east, and building this road gradually as the resources of the country would permit. That the undertaking to build this railway until final completion within a short term was a vicious policy, to say the least, is fully proved by the conduct of the Government since they have entered office. It is proved by their hesitation and vacillation in carrying out their scheme when the necessity of carrying it out was forced on them, and it is further shown by the present contract. What has been the policy of the present Government? In less than three years they have changed their policy three times. The first year after they had resumed power, they came before Parliament with a grand scheme—a new idea—and the idea was that this road should be henceforth considered as an Imperial work, that the Imperial authorities should be asked to contribute to it, because the surplus population of the Empire would find homes in the North-West. This idea was accepted by the followers of the hon. gentleman as a masterpiece of policy. It was represented as such by the party orators and the press;

yet, good as the idea was, it did not last. It withered as the flowers of summer, but was immediately replaced by another scheme which was submitted last Session. The principle of this scheme was that the lands should pay for the building of the road. This scheme was accepted by the followers of the hon. gentleman with the same enthusiasm as was the first, yet it also met an early fate. It did not last, and no wonder. When the Government brought down this plan, a feeling of anxiety was felt throughout the country, and that feeling found vent in the resolution moved by the present leader of the Opposition. That resolution, it is true, was voted down, but I think we can survive it. Many hon. gentlemen opposite, when voting down that resolution, strove hard to conceal under a smiling face a heavy heart. I think we can survive that, because the Government, immediately after the Session was over, abandoned the very policy which they had called on their followers to support. Yet something had to be done. The Government were in a dilemma, for if they went on to carry out the work they might cripple the finances of the country to a degree almost beyond remedy. If they did not go on with the work they would be going back on their old policy. What was to be done? Like the wizard in the tale who found his own life in constant danger from the fangs and claws of the strange progeny which he had roared, they, too, had created a monster that threatened their own destruction. What was to be done? They went to Europe. They offered their white elephant for sale in the markets of Paris and London, but no one would accept it even as a gift. Finally, they had to take the beast home, where they gave it a vast territory to roam over, made it impossible for any other being to go into the pasture, and then they found somebody who was willing to relieve them of this ever recurring cause of anxiety. That this proposed arrangement is a vicious policy is well proved by the language which the Government used to induce their supporters to accept it. What are the reasons they gave their supporters for voting in favor of this contract? What was the answer they gave to the numerous objections raised against it? It was simply this: do not criticise but accept the contract; it is the best we could get. In order to show this clearly I cannot do better than quote on this subject the very words which were used the other day by the hon. Minister of Public Works:

"Well, Mr. Chairman, in this case we have not to deal with only one party, we have to deal with the Syndicate. Those gentlemen are the one party and we are the other. We have to make a contract with them for the building of this road. Shall we say to them, you must take that or nothing? That is not the way contracts are made. You have to give and take. You have to take into consideration the exigencies of the case. You have to see whether your terms are acceptable to the other party, and after reasoning the matter with the other party you will find that he is right, and your proposal is not sufficient, and if you have to give more lands or more money, or other conditions, the result is that you have to agree to give and take on both sides to prepare the contract and sign it. That is what we have done. Here is a contract, and we say it is the best we can do."

Is that the language of a free Government, of the executive power of a free nation? What has seized the Government of this country that they have been compelled to accept this contract from the Syndicate? Who in the world compelled the Government to negotiate with the Syndicate? What great calamity has befallen this country that the Government should be compelled to surrender unconditionally to the Syndicate? If there had been a war and we had been defeated, and the Government forced to accept from the victor such terms as suited him to enforce, and if the Government came here to have the treaty ratified, would their language have been different to that used in order to induce their supporters to accept the contract? When, in the year 1871, at the termination of the disastrous war with Prussia, the Provincial Government of France met the newly elected National Assembly and presented to it the treaty concluded with Germany by which France ceded to that