

mous sum of three or four hundred dollars. Even Senator Aikins will not deny that the hotel was worth something, and in his most desperate moments he has not been known to accuse the Government of a greater crime than the squandering of the sum mentioned. The circumstances are briefly stated thus: Before it became known that Fort William had been elected as the terminus a number of gentlemen formed a company to build an hotel at this place. The members of the company were Allan Oliver, Jos. Davidson, Brown & Wells, J. J. Vickers, Geo. Faulkener, J. S. McHannay, A. Mitchell, J. Duckworth, W. D. Mackenzie, John Ritchie, Robert Hay (now the Conservative candidate for Centre Toronto), Robert Henry, John McNab, S. J. Keith, and J. D. Henderson, nearly all of Toronto and of both shades of politics. The undertaking was a purely business one, but unfortunately the firm of Oliver, Davidson & Co. was mixed up with it, and that, of course, is enough to stamp the whole affair as the basest of political conspiracies—in the eyes of your genuine Conservative. A builder, Mr. J. D. Henderson, mentioned as a stockholder, was assigned half the shares on the understanding that he would put up the building. Work was begun early in 1875 and when the valutors visited Fort William the following year the hotel was well advanced towards completion. The building was rough in its construction, especially when compared with others in older and more civilized districts; but from the evidence taken before the Committee, it would seem to have been of a tolerably substantial character, and exactly what would be expected in a "western town," just springing into existence. It came within the limits of the Government reserve, however, and had to be appropriated. In valuing it Messrs. Reid and Wilson took exact cost as nearly as could be ascertained, and with a reasonable allowance for damages, a sum of five thousand and twenty-nine dollars was allowed. It may have been excessive, but surely it is fair to assume that the valutors were in a better position to judge of the reasonableness of the amount than any of those Conservative orators who have so much to say about it, and they were at least equally anxious to do the strictest justice between the company and the Government. Apart

from every other consideration, the public will be disposed to place implicit reliance on the judgment of the valutors, who had no possible interest of any kind to serve other than the simple carrying out of a fair and equitable bargain between the two parties. They were honorable men, and in discharging the position to which they were appointed there is not the slightest reason to believe that they had any desire to favor one party more than another; indeed, the supposition is all the other way, and there was not a particle of evidence throughout the whole investigation to indicate anything to the contrary. The testimony of Henderson, Oliver, Davidson, Leys and other interested parties may be entirely disregarded, although it may be stated that the first mentioned, in his examination, showed himself to be a person of very loose scruples, and his evidence was distinctly contradicted in several important points by all the others. There is good reason to believe that nothing would ever have been heard by the Neebing Hotel had not Henderson disputed with Mr. Davidson over a payment of sixteen dollars, which the former claimed as due to him. Two practical builders, Mr. Durrand of London, and Mr. Law of Meaford, made estimates of the cost, the former from measurements supplied him by Mr. Reid, and the latter from measurements made by himself. Mr. Durrand expressed it as his opinion that \$2,500 would have been a reasonable allowance for the building as it came into the hands of the Government. Mr. Law went more into detail, examined carefully the whole structure from cellar to roof, and declared on oath that the building was worth \$3,000. The amount allowed by the valutors was \$3,450, the difference between that sum and \$5,029, the total value being made up by the price of the land, unused material and damages or interest. But it must not be too hurriedly concluded that the sum of \$450, the difference between the estimate made by the valutors and that made by Mr. Law, was in reality a gift to the Hotel Company, or that the country suffered to that extent through the incapacity or worse, of the valutors. There is no reason to believe that the accounts of all work and material, which were supplied to them by the Managers of the Company, were other than correct, and had the law experienced all the dis-