

early informed of the views and intentions of the American Government, and that they were informed, too, by the Colonial Secretary, that it was desirable that they should communicate at an early period to him their views on this subject. If the Colonial Secretary had entertained the views suggested by the Prime Minister, that it was beneath the dignity of Canada to open negotiations with the view of securing a renewal of those fishery regulations, or the establishment of others which would be satisfactory to the two countries, he would not have made the communication he did; but when he informed the Canadian Government that they should avail themselves of the two years that would elapse after the notice was given, for the purpose of renewing the negotiations and re-establishing treaty regulations between the two Governments, it is clear he saw nothing beneath the dignity of the Canadian, or the English Government either, for that matter, in taking initiatory steps for the purpose of renewing those negotiations. And, after all the hon. gentleman said, it is plain to everyone who has read this correspondence and to everyone who has listened to the hon. gentleman that he, in effect, did take the initiative in renewing the negotiations and in abandoning the rights of the Canadian fisheries to the Americans for the time being, for the sake of a promise that at some future period the Government of the United States would be prepared to agree to the appointment of a commission. Now, I would like the hon. gentleman to tell us in what respect we are in a better position now than we were, or would have been if the hon. gentleman had taken action upon the suggestion contained in the Message of President Arthur. That Message did not, as the hon. gentleman said, suggest a treaty of reciprocity, or negotiations for a treaty of reciprocity; it suggested the appointment of a commission:

"I suggest that Congress create a commission to consider the general question of our rights in the fisheries, and the means of opening to our citizens, under just and enduring conditions, the richly stocked fishing waters and sealing grounds of British North America."

That was what was suggested by President Arthur, and I would like to know whether President Cleveland or Mr. Bayard has done anything more. Is the hon. gentleman in any better position at this moment, after the negotiations he has had, than he would have been if he had accepted the invitation which is indirectly given by President Arthur in his Message to Congress? The hon. gentleman says: It is true President Arthur made a suggestion, but what guarantee had we that Congress would act on that suggestion? What guarantee has the hon. gentleman, at the present moment? Not any. Then he is in no better position. The hon. gentleman says that the hon. member for East York (Mr. Mackenzie) refused to renew certain negotiations, with reference to the Treaty of Washington, in connection with the reciprocity treaty negotiated by Mr. Brown.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I said nothing of that.

Mr. MILLS. I certainly understood the hon. gentleman to say so. At all events, when the subject was under discussion, a few days ago, he gave as a reason, if not to-day, that there was the same Congress, that there was no change. But the Congress under President Arthur was not the one that was in office when Mr. Brown negotiated his reciprocity treaty. On the contrary, we might fairly believe that that Congress might take a more favorable view of the matter; at all events, when the President made the suggestion, there was no impropriety or want of dignity in assuming that it was at least practicable to enter into negotiations to secure a fair understanding, which the hon. gentleman says he is going to do at this moment. I want to know if the chances are any more favorable. There is a Democratic Administration, which is, perhaps, ready to make freer trade relations with this country; but there is a Senate which is in

Mr. MILLS.

less accord with the President than it was with President Arthur; and the hon. gentleman, according to his own statement, does not stand in a whit better position to-day than he did two years ago; he has no better chances of succeeding to-day than he had then; and if it was undignified to have made the offer two years ago, it is equally undignified at the present moment. But the question whether the hon. gentleman could or could not succeed is not the question which is to govern the consideration of this matter. The hon. gentleman might fairly assume that trade relations between the two countries, which are mutually advantageous to each, are likely to be established. The statement of President Arthur shows that the American Government do, after all, attach more importance to the fisheries of Canada than the hon. gentleman says the fishermen of Canada do. He says it is possible something may be said here that may interfere with our chances of success. What could more tend to damage the chances of successful negotiation in this matter than the declaration made by the hon. gentleman himself? He has told us that our fishermen would be quite satisfied to allow the Americans the free use of our fisheries, on condition that they were allowed free access to the American market.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I did not say that, but I said they would be willing for the next six months.

Mr. MILLS. The hon. gentleman did not qualify his statement when he made it. As I understood him, and I will repeat it; and if he says I am incorrect, I will accept his correction. I understood him to say, and my hon. friends around me understood him to say, that our fishermen would be quite ready to acquiesce in an arrangement with the United States that would admit the Americans to the use of Canadian fisheries, on condition that Canadians were admitted to the American market with their fish. I ask, what is the effect of that statement upon these negotiations? What chance has he to receive any indemnity for the use of our fisheries after a declaration of that sort? He, himself, it is clear from his statement, does not expect to succeed in obtaining compensation, or he never would have made a declaration of that kind. There is damage done to our case, if our fisheries are represented of so little value in the estimation of the people of both countries, as they are represented to be in the declaration of the hon. gentleman. There has been no declaration made on this side that is calculated so seriously to interfere with our claim for compensation as the statement of the First Minister to-day. The hon. gentleman admits the arrangement is a one-sided arrangement. Why, the declaration of Mr. Bayard makes that point clear. He says it is not competent for the Executive of the United States to alter the Customs laws, by admitting Canadian fish into the American market. The hon. gentleman ought to have known that. I venture to say the hon. member for Northumberland (Mr. Mitchell) knew it, and many other members know enough about the American system of government to know that that is the case. Why did not the hon. gentleman press negotiations upon this question before Congress rose, while it was still in the power of Congress to deal with the question? He knows it was open to Congress to propose that this treaty should terminate in December instead of July. It was the business of Congress to look after the interest of the fishermen of the United States, and say whether they would repeal or put an end to the treaty during the fishing season. If any inconvenience resulted to the American fishermen from this action, they could only hold the American Government responsible. Why did the hon. gentleman show this special interest for the fishermen of the United States and not show corresponding interest in behalf of our fishermen, by seeing that our fishermen were admitted to the American market? The interests of the American fishermen were the special concern of the