

office, and one of growing importance; that it is an office which requires the ablest men and their utmost energies to discharge the duties. But the High Commissioner deserts his office in the month of December, comes out to Canada and will remain here some months, four or five months, no doubt, elapsing from the time of his leaving his office until his return. There is nearly half the year, therefore, during which we have no Commissioner. We have not an acting Commissioner, and there is only a clerk to discharge all the important duties. What! Are all the eggs addled? What about all the commercial treaties we have heard about during recent years? Is nothing going to happen? When I ventured to make a suggestion in regard to the office, I was told that there was not a moment on which a treaty was not on the carpet; that it was necessary to have a man ready to take advantage of the first opportune moment, and that an important concession by France had been lost by twenty-four hours delay. Yet the High Commissioner is here and can only act in London by cable. Thus, I have stated as briefly as possible, the difficulties, and the House is entitled to explanations as to the arrangement completed after the close of last Session, and now in force, under which the same person fills the office of Minister of Railways and High Commissioner of Canada.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. There can be no objection, of course, to this motion, and the Government will be very glad to bring down any papers covered by it. The hon. gentleman objects very much to my hon. friend holding the two positions. One, that of hon. Minister of Railways, will, I believe, be a tolerably permanent position—for I think he may be expected to hold it for some years, if he chooses—and the other of a more temporary nature. When Sir Alexander Galt sent in his resignation as High Commissioner, it was found absolutely necessary that some person should be on the spot in England, on account of some matters which were of pressing importance, or threatened to be of pressing importance, and that, therefore, the Government should have an officer there at once. The Government asked Sir Charles Tupper to go to England for that purpose, and go he did. The arrangement in the first place was of a temporary nature, and it is not yet of a permanent nature; but it was of very great importance that he should go to England, as I have already stated. I think that the fact—the happy fact, the accidental fact, for which, of course, we cannot take any credit—the happy accident of my hon. friend having accepted the office of High Commissioner at my request, enabled us by his peculiar knowledge, professional and otherwise, to save the trade of Canada from a very great loss. I think we cannot over-estimate the value of the assistance rendered by him as High Commissioner in the saving of the cattle trade of Canada. As we are perhaps the only country which continues that trade with England, the gain has undoubtedly been a very great one. It is quite true that a Minister is, as a general rule, bound to perform his duties by person and in person, but after all it is a question of confidence in the Government. So far as the Government is concerned, it is a question for them to see that the duties of the different Departments are thoroughly well performed. I believe the Minister of Railways, enjoyed, and still enjoys, the confidence of the country and of the majority of this House as Minister of Railways. I believe also, that my hon. friend, the Minister of Agriculture, who performed the duties of Acting Minister of Railways, enjoys that confidence. We knew perfectly well that when this important business called away Sir Charles Tupper, for a time, from Canada, my hon. friend the Minister of Agriculture, on account of his well-known acquaintance with everything connected with railway matters, was peculiarly fitted to perform the duties of the Department of Railways in Sir Charles Tupper's absence. I believe that the results have shown that

every duty has been attended to; that there has been no injury or prejudice to the public service in the hands of my hon. friend, the Acting Minister of Railways; that he has performed his duty well and wisely; and I have no doubt that the Minister of Railways, when he left Canada, knew he was leaving his Department in the hands of a colleague in whom he had the utmost and most thorough confidence. When the papers are brought down, I have no doubt that this discussion will be renewed. I do not see, however, that there is anything in the argument of the inconsistency of my hon. friend being a member of the Government as Minister of Railways, and being an officer of the Government, while in England as Lord High Commissioner.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. As the hon. gentleman opposite has conferred the peerage upon my hon. friend the Minister of Railways, I can only give my humble sanction to the bestowal of that honour. It would, perhaps, be improper to unite these two offices for a series of years, but for a temporary purpose there is no inconsistency. The hon. gentleman knows that it is a matter of practice in England. There was no inconsistency in Lord Beaconsfield, or the Marquis of Salisbury, going to Berlin, or in Lord John Russell, a member of the Administration in England, taking part in the Treaty of Vienna, after the Crimean war, when he was Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and when, as we all remember, his action as Minister at Vienna was repudiated by the Government of which he was a member, the result being that the Vienna Treaty, which was ratified by him, was not ratified by the English Government. The question of inconsistency was never raised, for it was frequently the case in England. My hon. friend's knowledge of parliamentary and governmental history will enable him to supply from his memory innumerable instances of members of the Cabinet going on such missions, some of rather a protracted character, and keeping their positions in the Government of England while acting as servants or officers of the joint Administration abroad. It really, after all, is a question of fitness—each instance must be governed by its own circumstance. It may be that the Minister is, perhaps, the very best person in the public interest to relieve these officers for a time, and allow them to leave headquarters and go abroad on special missions for the good of their country. In this case, it is simply a question of whether it was really in the interest of Canada at the time, that my hon. friend should consent to go to England. I do not wish to draw on discussion just now, but I shall just read a portion of the Minute of the Council under which my hon. friend was appointed.

Mr. MACKENZIE. Does the hon. gentleman know of any case in which a British Minister was sent as resident ambassador to a foreign court?

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. As a resident ambassador?

Mr. MACKENZIE. Yes. The hon. gentleman was our ambassador.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I recall one case, that of Lord Castlereagh, a member of the Government, who went in 1814 to Vienna and remained as Minister during a whole year. He was not nominally a resident ambassador, but he was resident there for a whole year, settling the treaties consequent upon the fall of Napoleon. There are other instances, though I cannot recall them to my recollection at this moment, but I am sure I can furnish my hon. friend many instances of the kind. The Minute of Council states;