

of serious and dangerous conflict which might have brought on grave complications, and compromise the peace necessary to the advancement of our young country and the development of its immense resources. The revision and amendment of the laws relating to our railways, the Act concerning the Election of Members to the House of Commons, the Controverted Elections Act, the Civil Service Act, the Electoral Franchise Act, and the improvement in the system of Government in the North-West, are all important questions which will occupy our attention. The very considerable increase in the population of the Canadian North-West, and its rapid development will entail not only important amendments, but even an almost radical change in the existing laws in order to harmonise them with the new conditions into which the country has entered in late years. With respect to the laws affecting the election of members of this House, if experience has proved the need of modifying them, to render their administration more effective and easy, we should not be blind to the circumstance, Mr. Speaker, that several of the trials for the invalidation of elections, held during the recess, have brought to light a lamentable state of things, and I feel convinced that every member of the House will back the Government in its attempts to stay this flood of corruption which threatens to invade our electoral body and constitutes a real danger for the future of our Parliamentary institutions. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I beg to thank you and this House for the kind attention and the tokens of sympathy which you have been pleased to impart to me.

Mr. LAURIER. Mr. Speaker: I am entrusted by Her Majesty's Opposition in this House to present the views of hon. gentlemen on this side of the House on the questions suggested by the Speech from the Throne. Before I proceed I am sure the House will bear with me if I pause to give expression to the inexpressible regret felt by the Opposition in this House, and largely shared, I am confident, by hon. gentlemen on the other side, that the seat of the hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake) is still vacant by reason of ill-health. I am sure that everyone will agree with me that at any time Canada could ill afford to lose the services of one of views so broad and of abilities pre-eminent, and I am sure also that on the present occasion when so many important questions are looming up for discussion and determination, the absence of the hon. gentleman from his seat will be felt as a national calamity. It is a more pleasant duty to me, Sir, to offer to the mover and seconder of the Address my hearty congratulations, if they will accept them from me, on the very able manner in which they have discharged what is always a very difficult task. I am sorry to say, and perhaps I will not surprise them or any hon. member in this House, if I state at once that I cannot agree in everything they have said; but there is one thing upon which I can cordially agree with them, and it is one on which everybody, not only in this House but in the country at large, will agree with them, in the gracious tribute which both of those hon. gentlemen paid to His Excellency the Governor General. Lord Lansdowne came here with an illustrious name, made illustrious, not only by his own career but by preceding generations of statesmen, and if I were to characterise, according to my own judgment, what has been his career in this country, I would say that it has been characterised all through by eminent wisdom, and when he leaves us—I am sure I am speaking the feelings of every Canadian when I say this—wherever he goes and wherever he may be he will carry with him our esteem and affection, and our hope of ever-increasing success for himself. Now, Sir, the Speech promises us several measures of legislation, some of which I am sure may prove very useful; but I am rather sceptical, judging of the future by the past, that many of them will come to anything like practical legislation, or, if they do, that they will be put into force. Last year, upon a

similar occasion, the right hon. gentleman at the head of the Government stated that he did not share the opinion once expressed by his former colleague, Sir George E. Cartier, who on one occasion stated that he never would be satisfied until the only measure brought down by the Government of the day would be the Supply Bill. But, Sir, while the hon. gentleman protested against that course, in my humble opinion he was doing indirectly the very thing against which he was protesting. For instance, last year the Speech from the Throne stated:

"Your attention will be invited to the expediency of establishing a Department of Trade and Commerce under the supervision of a responsible Minister."

That statement was somewhat controverted by the hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake), when reviewing the Speech—that is to say, he doubted the utility or expediency of establishing such a department, and the right hon. gentleman defended his measure, or rather his contemplated measure, with some warmth and vigor. The right hon. gentleman gave his reason for this new departure in the following language:—

"I was not prepared for the sneer of the hon. gentleman as to one of the modes which had been adopted by the Government for the development of the trade and commerce of the country. The hon. gentleman says he hopes there are some other steps to be taken than that of taking a new departure. The hon. gentleman must know that from year to year the different Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade of Canada have been representing to the different Governments of the country, have been petitioning for the establishment of such a department as is proposed, and for the appointment of a Minister specially charged with the interests of trade and the development of the commerce of the Dominion. I have evidence of this desire from every great city in Canada, and from every great commercial body formed for the purpose of aiding in the development of trade, and in obedience to this universal cry the Government have resolved to establish a department especially devoted to those subjects."

That measure was brought down, it was carried and is now on the Statute-book. But, Sir, I vainly look over the Treasury benches to see the Minister who is to take charge of trade and look after the interests of commerce. It would seem as if the Government, as soon as they had resolved to carry out the wishes of the trade and establish a department specially devoted to that purpose, had exhausted their energies. I will not make any odious comparisons, but I will say that in my opinion that the way of the Government seems to be paved with good intentions, but is deficient in good deeds. I ask, what can the matter be? Am I to suppose, I think I am forced to suppose, that the Government have come to the conclusion expressed by Mr. Blake, that the formation of the new department was inexpedient. If I must not believe that, what am I to believe? I would have to believe that this apparent desire to meet the wishes of trade and commerce was nothing else than a blind for the passing of a measure of patronage which might be kept for an emergency; or, perhaps, I would have to believe that the representations of the commercial bodies having once met with the consideration of the Government were returned to the pigeon-holes and there forgotten, and treated with no more respect than if they had come from Indians or Half-breeds. Again, upon the same occasion we were told in the Speech from the Throne:

"You will also be asked to consider the propriety of making such improvements in the organisation of the Departments of Justice, Customs and Inland Revenue as will provide greater facilities for the dispatch of the large and increasing volume of business with which those departments are charged."

But it turned out, when matters were developed, that the improvement so far as regards the Departments of Customs and Inland Revenue, was that the Minister of Customs and Minister of Inland Revenue were to be improved out of existence. I am glad to see, and I say it in all sincerity, that the Minister of Customs and the Minister of Inland Revenue have both their heads solid on their shoulders. But again I ask, what can the matter be?—what is the reason that, when, last year, it was in the public interest, that those hon.