

mons, on 24th February, 1871, in reference to the appointment of that Commission, and the great danger that serious injury might be done by it to Canadian interests. Sir Alexander Galt used the following language :

"The fisheries were of paramount importance to us. They meant an important source of employment and trade to us, and a field for the training up of seamen. They have intrinsic merits also. They constituted valuable means of commercial exchange with the United States—means of securing useful trading equivalents from our neighbors. It was the way we dealt with the fisheries and navigation of the St. Lawrence, upon which depended our future advantage and superiority with the United States, in negotiating any commercial convention. If we made an improper use of them—if we lost those advantages we should be placed in a position of inferiority, having nothing to offer for enviable opportunities."

Sir Alexander Galt wound up his speech by moving the following as one of a series of Resolutions, earnestly deprecating interference by the Commission with the territorial rights of the people of Canada :

"That this House has always been, and now is, prepared to concede the most free and unrestricted use of the fisheries and inland navigation to the United States, upon receiving as an equivalent therefor, complete compensation in the modification of the United States commercial system, directed to the more free and liberal interchange of the products of labor in the two countries."

"That the concession to the United States of the freedom of the fisheries and of the St. Lawrence, without compensation, would place Canada in almost disadvantageous position for future negotiations, by depriving her of the means of offering any adequate equivalent for those concessions she is desirous of obtaining from that nation."

Other negotiations took place after the Treaty of Washington was signed, but to these it is not now necessary to refer. Such then, honorable gentlemen, was the position of the Reciprocity question when Sir John Macdonald's Government resigned and the present Administration came into power. And to show the light in which the Right Honorable gentleman who leads the Opposition in the House of Commons then regarded the situation, I will now read from a speech of that gentleman, made in the other Chamber in March, 1874, when the announcement was made to Parliament that I had been associated with Sir Edward Thornton in the renewal of negotiations:—

"His hon. friend from West Toronto had thrown out a remark which would discourage the negotiations at Washington, because he had stated that the old Reciprocity Treaty, if they obtained that, would not give satisfaction to the country, as something more was wanted. Now, if they were only to be consulted in making such a treaty, they could put in what they thought proper; but there were two sides to the question, and what our negotiator had to think of was, not whether we should get all we required, but to get as much as possible. He should be very glad to see Canada get the old Reciprocity Treaty. He had no hopes that we would succeed in getting it in its entirety, but if the hon. gentleman made an approximation to it he should be exceedingly glad. If they could protect the salt, wool, and timber interests, so much the better; and if they could open the market still more, so much the greater gain for Canada. They should not scan too much the concessions made on the part of the United States, so long as our concessions were not too great on the other side."

The right hon. gentleman, at the very moment when the men who had relieved him of the cares of office were about opening negotiations at Washington, might well have omitted so inconsiderate a statement as that even a small portion of the old treaty would be acceptable to Canada in exchange for what he (Sir John A. Macdonald) had left it in our power to offer to the United States. I cannot but think it was exceedingly wrong that such a statement should have been made, with the certain knowledge that it would be carried to Washington, and be used there in depreciating the value of our concessions to the Americans. While agreeing with both of the hon. gentlemen from whose speeches I have read, as to the injurious influence of the Washington Treaty concessions on our position as negotiators with the Republic, I entirely dissent from them in their assumption that, apart from the use of our great sea fisheries and the free navigation of the St. Lawrence, we have not commercial advantages to offer to the Americans quite equal in value to any we seek from them, I venture to think that this error has tinged all their negotiations at Washington, and that a close enquiry as to the value to the United States of the commercial traffic alone between the Republic and the British Provinces for a long series of years past would show it to have greatly surpassed in importance and profit any other branch of their foreign commerce, except their direct trade