

question, is opened for us in consequence of this identical mission to Washington. My hon. friend beside me told the House, and he told it truly, that the Ministers themselves, in their proper persons, had utterly and wholly failed to assign any substantial reason of any kind whatever for the dissolution of Parliament. Although the Ministers may not in so many words have said so, there is no doubt whatever that they communicated to their subsidized press throughout the country a statement in which, and by means of which, they endeavoured to induce their supporters all over the Dominion to believe that they had entered into negotiations with the United States; that they had ground to believe that these negotiations would result favourably, and that if only their hands were strengthened, if only the people would give them a reasonably strong mandate, there was every reason to believe that they would succeed in coming to satisfactory terms with the United States. What they stated was as follows,—and they stated this, be it remembered, on the very day, I believe, on which the dissolution was announced :—

“Sir John Macdonald’s Government not long ago, made a definite proposal to the Washington authorities for the settlement of all existing differences between the two countries on a basis of an extension of the trade between the two countries. It involves partial reciprocity, the enumerated articles to include quite a number of natural products. But the proposition discards any idea of commercial union or unrestricted reciprocity. Moreover, these propositions were invited and suggested by the Washington authorities. Commissioners from Canada and Great Britain will start for Washington on 4th March the date of the opening of the new Congress.”

The House will observe that these proceedings, according to this communication, had gone so far that the British Government were to send commissioners along with ours; and they were to start on the 4th of March—

“The result of the Canadian elections will be known on 6th March, the day the commissioners reach Washington. In order that this commission may have no uncertain sound, Sir John Macdonald has decided to appeal to the country and ask for judgment on these proposals of his to the Washington authorities.”

He had made definite proposals, of which not one person outside of his Cabinet, either friend or foe, knew one word; and he had decided to ask the opinion of the electors on these proposals, which they could neither approve nor condemn, because none of us had the slightest idea of what they were. Well, Sir, unfortunately, communication is quick, and communication is free as yet after a fashion between Canada and the United States; and these statements having been circulated in the United States, had, as was natural, attracted considerable attention there; and whereas the First Minister told us to-night that a door for friendly communication had been opened as far back as November last, I notice that a person, who presumably knows as much as he does about the intentions of the United States Government, writes in the following fashion to a member of the United States Congress :—

“DEAR MR. BAKER,—I authorize you to contradict the rumours you refer to. There are no negotiations whatever on foot for a reciprocity treaty with Canada, and you may be assured no such scheme for reciprocity with the Dominion, confined to natural products, will be entertained by this Government. We know nothing of Sir Charles Tupper’s coming to Washington.

“Very truly yours,

“JAMES G. BLAINE,

“Secretary of State for the United States.”

Now, Sir, which is to be believed, the statement that we have heard that there was a door of friendly communication opened as far back as November last, or the assurance of Mr. Blaine over his own signature that there are no negotiations whatever on foot with Canada? Let the hon. gentlemen reconcile these two statements as best they may. Let them, if they dare, either the hon. First Minister or his colleagues, singly or collectively, contradict the statement of Mr. Blaine. Let them dare on the floor of this Parliament to state that the Secretary of State of the United States put his name to a false declaration. Sir, in view of the fact that the statement, which was the only reason assigned for the dissolution, has been flatly contradicted by the highest authority in the United States, it appears to me that there can be hardly any room for doubt that a very grave fraud was committed both on the people of Canada and on His Excellency if he was induced to grant the dissolution on the grounds set forth in the memorandum I have just read. As to the people, we who took part in the last election all know that, whatever may have been done in certain individual cities, in scores and scores of constituencies the argument was used that if the people would only sustain the First Minister on the present occasion, he had the best possible reasons for believing that he would negotiate a treaty with the United States, and obtain, in particular, a repeal of the obnoxious clauses of the McKinley tariff. I say this dissolution was obtained on false pretences. There were strong reasons against it, plain and palpable on the surface. There is no doubt that the House, when it refused a revision of the voters’ lists last year, did so on the implied understanding that there was no reasonable chance or prospect of a dissolution being had until there was an opportunity to revise those lists. Then, it was perfectly well known that the census of this country must be taken at or about the 1st of April this year. It was known that under our constitutional act, if there is to be any material change in the representation to be given to the several Provinces, there is the strongest possible ground for requiring a new election to be had in order that the people may be properly represented. It was known perfectly well to the hon. gentleman, and to every member of the House, that the lists on which we voted were notoriously defective, many of them being based on assessment rolls three or four years old. It was known that many of the young men of this country, probably one-eighth, and certainly one-tenth of all the electors, would be disfranchised by the use of those lists. The Government, we were told, desired to obtain a full, free and unequivocal expression of the opinion of the people, and they undertook to obtain it under circumstances that made it physically impossible that all of the people should vote, and under circumstances which rendered it certain that there would be found on those lists an enormous proportion of men who had quitted this country, and who if brought back would have ceased to feel any vital interest in the good government of Canada. Neither is it a trifling consideration that it was well known, too, that there was at least one Minister of the Crown resting under grave suspicion, and liable when Parliament met to be indicted for grave malversation in office; and there was pretty