

allowed to go by default? England, after having offered that position to the First Minister, and it having been refused by him, would have been quite at liberty to have proceeded with that Commission and the settlement of all these questions without Canada being represented on the Commission, and those very men who attack me now for having been there and taken a certain course would have been just as loud in their complaints and just as bitter in their attacks, because I had neglected the interests of Canada. (*Cheers.*)

Sir, knowing as I said before what the consequences would be to myself of accepting that office, and foreseeing the attack that would be made upon me, I wrote a letter, which I do not read here now because it is a state paper addressed to His Excellency the Governor General informing him of the great difficulties of my position and that it was only from a sense of duty that I accepted the position. (*Cheers.*) On proceeding to Washington I found a general desire among the two branches into which the Joint High Commission divided itself, an equal desire I should say, on the part of the United States Commissioners as well as of the British Commissioners that all questions should be settled so far as the two governments could do so. There was a special desire that there should be a settlement.

It was very easy for the Commissioners, or the Government through their representatives, to make a Treaty, but in the United States there is a power above and beyond the Government, the Senate of the United States, which had to be considered. It was felt that a second rejection of a Treaty would be most disastrous for the future of both nations; that it would be a solemn declaration that there was no peaceable solution of the questions between the two nations. Many American statesmen said to me, "the rejection of the Treaty now means war," not war tomorrow or at any given period, but war whenever England happened to be engaged in other troubles, and attack from other sources. (*Hear, hear.*) You may, therefore, imagine, Mr. Speaker, and this House may well imagine, the solemn considerations pressing upon my mind, as well as upon the minds of my colleagues, if by any unwise course or from any rigid or preconceived opinions we should risk the destruction forever of all hope of a peaceable solution of the difficulty between the two kindred nations. (*Cheers.*)

Still, Sir, I did not forget that I was their chosen representative. I could not ignore the fact that I was selected a member of that Commission from my acquaintance with Canadian politics. I had continually before me not only the Imperial question but the interests of the Dominion of Canada which I was there especially to represent, and the difficulty of my position was that if I gave undue prominence to the interests of Canada I might justly be held, in England, to be holding a purely Colonial, selfish and absorbing view, regardless of the interests of the Empire on the whole and the interests of Canada as a portion of the Empire on the other hand, that I did not keep my eye too solely on Imperial interests, but that I should do all I could for this, my country, Canada.

It was a difficult position, as the House will believe, a position that pressed upon me with great weight and severity at the time, and

it is not diminished in any way since I have returned, except from the cordial support of my colleagues and I believe also my friends in this House.

In order to show that I did not for a moment forget that I was there to represent the interests of Canada, I must ask you to look at the despatch of 16th February, 1871 which reached me at Washington a few days after I arrived there—it will be seen that Lord Kimberley uses this expression: "As at present advised, Her Majesty's Government, are of opinion that the right of Canada to exclude Americans from fishing in the waters within the limits of three marine miles of the coast, is beyond dispute, and can only be ceded for an adequate consideration. Should this consideration take the form of a money payment, it appears to Her Majesty's Government that such an arrangement would be more likely to work well than if any conditions were annexed to the exercise of the privilege of fishing within the Canadian waters."

Having read that despatch, and the suggestion that an arrangement should be made on the basis of a money payment, and there being an absence of any statement that such an arrangement could be made without it, I thought it well that I should communicate with my colleagues at Ottawa, and although we had received again and again assurances from Her Majesty's Government that those rights would not be affected, given away, ceded without consent, it was thought well, in order to obtain the opinion of Her Majesty's Government on the general points to come under discussion, and the Fisheries in particular, to communicate by cable that Canada considered the Canadian fisheries to be her property and they could not be sold without her consent.

That communication was made by the Canadian Government on the 18th March, and of that Government I was a member. And not only did that communication proceed from the Canadian Government to England, giving them fair notice that the Canadian Government, of which I was a member, would insist upon the right of dealing with her own fisheries, but I took occasion to press upon the head of that commission that my own individual opinion, as representing Canada, should be laid before Her Majesty's Government.

And the answer that came back at once by cable was extended in full in the despatch of the 17th March, 1871; it was most satisfactory, because it stated that Her Majesty's Government had no intention of advising Her Majesty to part with those fisheries without the consent of Canada. Armed with this, I felt that I was relieved of a considerable amount of my embarrassment. I felt that no matter what arrangements were made—no matter whether I was out-voted by my colleagues on the Commission, or what instructions might be given by Her Majesty's Government—the interests of Canada were safe, because they were in her own hands and reserved to her own decisions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it must not be supposed that this was not a substantial concession on the part of Her Majesty's