

political discord. Let us agree to differ, when we do differ, conscientiously on the various subjects which affect Canada itself. Let us join together when we can agree upon what is best for the country, and when we differ let us do so conscientiously. Let us vote like men according to our consciences, and according to what we think is best for the interests of Canada. But let us endeavor as much as possible to keep out of the political arena, and keep ourselves free from questions which are calculated to arouse the hostile feeling of people who should otherwise be friendly. Let us try to reduce to a minimum the number of questions that are the cause of irritation and ill-feeling, socially and individually, as well as among classes, of our people in Canada. If I had been here, I would have voted for the amendment moved by my hon. friend for North Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy). I reiterate what I have already stated, that I believe it is perfectly within our competence to deal with this subject as far as to express our opinion. I believe we had a right to send the Address we did in 1882; I believe we had a right to reiterate our opinion in 1886; and I believe we have a right now to express our opinion on this question. But at the same time, seeing that it can produce no good results, that it cannot help Ireland or the Irish people in any way whatever, I believe, in the language of my hon. friend's resolution, that it is unwise and inexpedient that we should concern ourselves in a subject so purely a matter for Imperial consideration and legislation as the amendment to the criminal law so far as it relates to Ireland. Now, Sir, I wish to keep myself perfectly free and colorless as to an expression of opinion whether that Coercion Act is right or wrong. I quite agree with the amendment of my hon. friend from North Bruce (Mr. McNeill). We have not the Bill itself before us. Before this discussion took place in Parliament I had not even read the Bill, and I certainly have neither read nor seen nor considered the evidence on which that legislation is based; and I venture to say that the majority of the members of this House have not read either the debates arising on the measure or the arguments used by the Government in introducing it, or the papers and blue-books laid before Parliament, as the justification and the basis for it. We are not in a position to say whether that legislation is right or wrong, or whether the state of Ireland is such as to require it. There has been a great deal of confusion in this debate resulting from mixing up the question of Home Rule with the question of criminal legislation. The questions are quite different. I am strongly in favor of Home Rule, guarded as it was proposed to be by the resolution of 1882, and yet I cannot understand or believe that because the Imperial Parliament does not agree with me, or with the majority of the people of Ireland, on that subject, therefore there may not be such a state of lawlessness and outrage in Ireland as to call for and justify stringent criminal measures. Mr. Gladstone's Administration introduced and carried into law coercive measures more stringent than the present one, and more than that, enforced it, in the opinion of all Irishmen, in the most oppressive style. With regard to the measure now before Parliament, how can we know, unless we have applied our minds to the study of the whole evidence, and to the consideration of the actual state of Ireland, whether there has not been such an absence of all law and order as to require an increase in the stringency of the criminal law? I am not prepared, and I do not believe the majority of this House are prepared, to decide without full knowledge and cognisance of the facts, whether this coercive measure is right or wrong, whether it has been called for or not, or whether it is oppressively forced on the people of Ireland without any necessity for it. Therefore, Sir, while the introduction and discussion of this subject is not calculated to do Ireland any good, I say again—I cannot repeat it too often—that, in my opinion, it is disastrous to the best interests of the people of

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Canada—it is disastrous to the good feeling that ought to exist among the people of Canada—to have this question thrown upon us. I draw a great distinction between Irishmen in Parliament, who, full of sentiment and feeling for their own country, are wrapped in the consideration of the wrongs of Ireland. I can quite understand and appreciate and justify the course of my hon. friend from Montreal, and of the gentlemen of Irish birth or Irish parentage who, thinking only of their country, are led away from the consideration of the fact that the expression of these views will not do their country any good. I can draw a great distinction between them and other members of this House who are pressing this subject, not because it is going to do any good to Ireland or to Canada, but because, for political reasons, it is going to split the people of Canada. Then, Sir, there is another consideration. I believe it is not only the duty, but it is the interest of the people of Canada and their representatives, to avoid all matters of difference between the Imperial Government and Canada. We are connected with England so closely, our interests are so interwoven, England can do so much for us, that it is of the very greatest importance that, unless any right of privilege of ours is infringed upon, we should avoid all difference of opinion between Canada and the Imperial Government, no matter what party may be in power in England. Thank God, of late years, and ever since I have had anything to do with colonial affairs, I have found it made very little difference to Canada whether the Liberal or the Conservative party was in power in England. I am proud to say that during my time at least—and I can look back at forty years of public life—England has always been kind and good to the people of Canada; that whenever we went to the foot of the Throne we found the Imperial Government and the representatives of the English people in the Imperial Parliament ready to meet us fairly, to give us their support and countenance, and ready to aid us in many and most of the schemes and enterprises that have been undertaken by Canada for her own development; and even when we did not receive all the assistance we asked for—and sometimes we asked for a good deal more than we expected to get—during the whole of that long period, never has there been a single step taken by Her Majesty's Government or the people of England as represented in the Imperial Parliament, which affected or impaired a single right or privilege of the people of Canada, either as colonists, as British subjects or as free men. Therefore, it is of the very greatest importance that we should avoid, as much as possible, coming into collision, whether the Government be Liberal, extreme Tory or Conservative—my good friend opposite from Rouville (Mr. Gigault) drew a distinction between the Conservative and the Tory party—with the Home Government. We have got one burning question, the fishery question, upon which the interests of Canada—I merely quote this as an instance—are greatly interested. It is a matter in which a powerful nation close to us is taking a course antagonistic to what we consider not only our interests, but our rights. Her Majesty's Government is giving us that support which we have the right to expect; Her Majesty's Government believes that Canada has certain rights, and that Canada has acted rightly within the law and within the bonds of the treaty with the United States in asserting those rights. It is of some little importance, therefore, that we who are looking for this support from Her Majesty's Government, that we who are expecting to get, in the course of the negotiations now going on, a continuance of that support—it is important that we should not, with the imperfect evidence before us, with the want of evidence, and when it can do no good to the people we desire to serve, snub the Government, if I may use that expression. It is important we should not cast into the teeth of the Government whose support we are asking that