

capacity of leader of a party, but as an individual, for myself alone. The hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Rykert), the other evening, very much complained that I had not been heard from earlier, and he also, with that vivid imagination which he shares with the hon. member for Ottawa (Mr. Mackintosh), made some statements with reference to my course in debates on important questions, which I might challenge if it were perhaps worth while. I had thought that I had expressed opinions which are recorded in the *Debates*, and of which I believe I have no cause to be ashamed, with reference to the Streams Bill, the Boundary question, so far as that was at all a constitutional question, and the License law. But it seems that the hon. member's diligence and researches have failed to recall to his recollection or to enable him to ascertain that I ever spoke on any of these topics. However that may be, I never intended that this debate should close without my saying something upon this question; but, as I stated upon the occasion to which I refer, I desired to hear, being entirely uncommitted by any declaration or absolutely formed opinion, what was to be said on both sides of the question, and I have awaited, I think, a convenient time for the presentation of the case by those who have been assailing the Administration and by the Administration in its defence. I think we have the right to assume, at this period of the debate, that all the material positions which could be brought forward on the side of either of the contending parties have now been advanced. I waited, I confess with some anxiety, to hear the legal adviser of the Government, who, I thought, might at an earlier period than this have enlightened us upon those portions of this important question which specially appertain to his duty, to his responsibility, and to his office. But when I saw, two or three nights ago, after the close of the speech made by the hon. member for Iberville (Mr. Béchard), though half a dozen Ministers or more, including the Minister of Justice and the Secretary of State, were in their places, that the Government declined to rise; when I saw their supporters calling "question;" when I saw the Government insisting upon Opposition members, or upon hon. gentlemen on this side, gentlemen who did not take the view that the Government took, following one another, and thus declining the debate; when I found my hon. friend from East Quebec (Mr. Laurier) obliged to rise after the hon. member for Iberville, and when I found, 24 or 48 hours afterwards, that still the Minister of Justice did not rise, I presumed he was not going to rise at all, or, at any rate, not until after he had heard some other speakers on this side. If, therefore, I shall be obliged to state some conclusions, to advance some opinions, which, after the further light that he perhaps may be able to throw upon this subject, I should have modified, I trust that the House will not suppose, at any rate, after the taunt from the hon. member from Lincoln (Mr. Rykert), and after the course pursued by the Government so far with reference to the debate, that I have indecently hurried my presentation of my humble self to this House. I have said that I believe that there are materials very important to a satisfactory discussion of this question, which materials the Government have not thought fit to bring before us. I do not intend to enlarge upon that topic, having had an opportunity of referring to it a day or two ago. I say we ought to have had an opportunity of seeing some of the papers which have been brought down and which we have not yet seen, because we know that unprinted papers are accessible to but few. For my part, I have not yet had the opportunity of seeing a single paper brought down by the Government so far, with the exception of the instructions to the Crown counsel of which I obtained a copy. There are important papers, so far as I am able to gather from statements made by the Minister when presenting from time to time those which he

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did bring down, which are not yet brought down, and some, as I shall show before I resume my seat, very important. I think the conduct of the Administration on the question of the production of papers is blameable in the extreme. They use these papers as a fund upon which they can draw, so far as they think them advantageous to themselves in the conduct of the discussion; but such papers as they think do not tell in their favor, they hold back. Take the Minister of Militia. The other evening he thought it would help his argument with reference to the patriotism and disinterestedness of Riel, with reference to the degree of sympathy or the reverse which we ought to extend to him, to read a letter of Bishop Grandin. The Minister takes the letter out of his pocket, and he reads it. He thought it would help him and therefore he read it. He thought it would help him to anticipate the encounter, which I am sure we are looking forward to with great interest, of the two military men, the hon. Minister of Militia and the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Amyot). He thought it would do him a little good to bring down some telegrams in advance, and he read extracts of a lot of letters, and a couple of telegrams, which he says were sent to him by the hon. member for Bellechasse, and he read them at a time when the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Amyot) having already spoken, had no opportunity, according to the rules of debate, of replying to him, and when they were but very little relevant to the question. Such was the course that the hon. Minister of Militia thought consistent with his duty to the House, with the dignity of his position, that he thought consistent with the generosity which ought to prevail between political opponents. The Government select such papers as they think they can make a point on in the debate. These they bring down at the moment they want to use them, but the mass of papers, on the perusal of which, if they had been placed in an accessible form before us, a proper general judgment could be reached, these they refuse to bring down. They say they have no time to bring them down, that they have no time to do anything else but to debate this question from day to day, and have time only to bring down those papers which serve their arguments. I said the other day, and I repeat, that in my opinion the whole question of the conduct of the Government, before the rebellion and up to the outbreak, and the whole attitude and relation of the half-breeds and white settlers to the Government with reference to the various questions which have been agitated, are extremely material to the formation of a judgment upon this question. I did not say what the hon. the Minister of the Interior the other day misunderstood me as saying, that I thought we ought to debate them in the same debate on which we debate this question. I did not think so for a reason which is very obvious, for the reason that, even the debating of them by themselves, taking them altogether, is a question so large in point of time, in point of subject, in point of reference to documents, as to transcend the limits, the ordinary and reasonable limits of debate, while the question we have before us is one of quite sufficient magnitude and complication at any rate to involve a debate by itself. So far I quite agree, but what I said the other day, and what I reiterate, is that, notwithstanding that proposition as to the complexity and magnitude of the questions rendering it inconvenient that they should be debated together, it is none the less important to a sound decision upon this question that the other questions should be debated, and we are doing a wrong thing: we are putting the cart before the horse, when we discuss first of all the final act in the great drama, instead of dealing in the first instance with those precedent facts and circumstances, threshing them out, sifting them, and endeavoring to reach a conclusion as to the relative responsibilities and attitudes of the Government of the country and of the people who rose. I say that we ought to know that in order that