

May 3, 1872

ratification of the Treaty, before a single newspaper in the country had spoken upon it, he delivered a speech to which the hon. gentleman had referred, and the member for Durham West (Hon. Mr. Blake) had also expressed his views on the subject about the same time; and those views were in entire harmony with the views he had heard expressed ever since, and with the views of the entire press of the country.

They had the honor of leading public sentiment in this matter in that direction that they believed honestly to be due to a patriotic feeling for Canada as their country. He was not blind to the advantages that were to be derived from a sacrifice, and he would sacrifice a good deal for the interests of peace. He believed that he was no friend to his country who did not desire to suit his public policy in order to secure that amity and friendship that ought to prevail among nations, and under these circumstances it was peculiarly desirable, forming as we did in this colony one of the great families of the British race, that we should endeavour by every reasonable and just means to give effect to the measures of the Mother Country, in seeking to secure that amity with that other great branch of the British family on this continent.

We believe, however, that there was a limit beyond which we ought not to go. He did not believe that national health, national glory, and national pride were always to be produced by making sacrifices to what is justly called the "peace at any price" party. It was manifest that if we on this continent, hemmed in as we were by the people of the United States, whose political policy has been singularly aggressive, yielded up merely for the sake of so-called peace every advantage that we possessed within our territory, it would soon become a question how far it would be possible to pursue that policy and retain any trace of national life and public spirit.

The hon. gentleman said that he went to Washington simply as a Briton; that it was quite true he was a prominent Canadian, and, no doubt, that that had something to do with offering him the position. He (Hon. Mr. Mackenzie) thought from the evidence before the House that it had everything to do with it. We knew that the matter was submitted by the hon. gentleman to his colleagues, and by them approved; that he went to Washington although this House was in session; and that he practically solicited leave from the House to proceed there as the representative of Canada. This House afforded him every indulgence, and that was scarcely in accordance with the statement he had ventured tonight, that he knew he would not get fair play.

Upon the representations of the hon. gentleman last session, the resolutions of the member for Sherbrooke (Hon. Sir A.T. Galt) were not pressed. He believed that if they had been pressed the House would not have refused to adopt them; but the House accepting the hon. gentleman's declaration that he went there as their representative, they treated him with that magnanimity that he (Hon. Mr. Mackenzie) had said then and said now was their proper course. He had no doubt that if those resolutions had been pressed by the hon. member for Sherbrooke, it might have resulted in

something more favourable for this country than what was found afterwards to be the case.

He found also, from the Public Accounts, that this country had paid the expenses of the hon. gentleman at Washington as the Canadian representative, and it would not do now, in the face of those facts, to assert that he went there entirely independent, and that he maintained a position here as a member of this House entirely independent of his connection with that Commission. These remarks had been forced from him (Hon. Mr. Mackenzie) by the course of the hon. gentleman. He had listened with feelings of a painful conviction that he (Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald) had taken a step that would produce political consequences of a disastrous kind in the future, that it was a step in that retrogression which marked the decline of a people—a decline in that national spirit that is as essential to the well being of the country as food is to the life and vitality of man.

He had listened to the hon. gentleman's speech with pain, in consequence of another portion of it that referred more particularly to the position of the Mother Country. We were told that England had for some time almost stood alone in Europe, that she was threatened by various nations, and was this a time, he (Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald) asked, when we should insist upon our rights, and endanger Britain because of the tendency or desire of the United States to fall upon her when in a state of unpreparedness? Had it come to this, that the Premier of Canada had to make an appeal to the forbearance of Canadians because of the necessities of that great empire of which we form a part? Were we to live as a portion of the British Empire—was Britain herself to live merely by the sufferance of the United States, Russia, and other nations? No other interpretation could be put on his (Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald's) language than this, that this was a sacrifice demanded of us because of a state of weakness into which the Mother Country had fallen. He (Hon. Mr. Mackenzie) denied this. He believed that England still held supremacy over the nations of the world.

He (Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald) afterwards endeavoured to show that the question of the Fisheries was one of very great doubt; he endeavoured to show that by the interpretation put on the Treaty of 1783 by certain writers in the United States it was really a matter of doubt whether, under the Convention of 1818 we had the actual right to those fisheries or not. If this was not meant, why introduce the argument at all? Every person who had read International Law knew that the American Government had unconditionally accepted long ago the fact that Canada had sole jurisdiction three miles outside the coast, from headland to headland. Still, Mr. Commissioner Campbell was sent home, he made his representations to the Imperial Government and out of that comparatively trifling mission to settle a comparatively small subject they had had this enormous matter brought upon them whereby they had sold their fisheries and given away their rivers, and allowed and encouraged the American Government to trample on their rights. In order to secure what they had not secured they had made these extraordinary sacrifices.