

6573p2
House of Commons Debates.

SECOND SESSION—SEVENTH PARLIAMENT.

SPEECH OF THE HON. DAVID MILLS

ON THE

957
30/11/92
Right of Canada to make her own Treaties

OTTAWA, 7th APRIL, 1892

SUPPLY—COMMERCIAL TREATIES.

Mr. FOSTER moved that the House again resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). Mr. Speaker, I am about to submit to the House a motion of very great importance, a motion which, in my opinion, the House would be wanting in its duty to the country if it fails to support. I am about to ask the House to declare that the time has come when commercial treaties, in the interests of Canada, should be negotiated by persons who are responsible to the Government of Canada and for whose acts the advisers of the Crown in Canada should be held responsible to the House of Commons. We have often, within these walls, had drawn for us bright word pictures of our immense area, telling us how we spanned the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and how we stretched from the fertile regions of the temperate zone far into the regions of perpetual frost. We have had presented to us glowing word pictures of the teeming millions who, at no distant day, are to fill the waste places, and to turn what is now a solitude into fruitful fields, dotted with towns and cities, filled with a busy and prosperous population. But after these delightful anticipations are realized, even our national powers are to remain the same as they are at present; are to remain stationary, our political disabilities are to continue, and our political life and actions are to operate within the limits fixed

by the events and by the conditions of a period long since passed. Though the country may grow to the thought, feeling and stature of manhood, there must be no constitutional growth corresponding with the general progress in wealth and population of the country. I repudiate this doctrine; I maintain that it is one inimical to our progress and opposed to the genius of our institutions. Mr. Speaker, the time has come when the gentlemen on the Treasury benches ought to deal candidly with the House; they ought to make their position on this subject of commercial treaties, perfectly intelligible to the House and to the country. If I rightly understand them, it is their contention that our foreign trade relations must, as long as we remain a part of the Empire, continue in other hands than ours, so in their opinion we must choose between British connection and self-government beyond that measure of self-government which we already possess. We must consent to leave forever the regulation of our foreign trade in other hands, or we must submit to being put out of the British family and left to protect ourselves from foreign encroachment. I do not know whether, if this alternative was the necessary result of the proposition which I maintain, that it would seriously menace our future prospects; but I deny altogether that any such alternative is before us arising out of this subject. That such an alternative is involved has often been asserted, but no attempt has ever been made to sustain this