

What did this resolution say? That “this House regrets to learn that Her Majesty’s advisers have seen fit to assume the responsibility of withdrawing the claims of Canada against the United States for compensation on account of the Fenian raids.”

His hon. friend had stated that he would vote for that resolution, and that he regretted that these claims were withdrawn; yet last session he had stated that, under arrangements between the two Governments, these claims would not be presented at all, and now he censures Her Majesty’s Government for not doing what he said they could not do.

He (Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald) had stated the other day that the miscarriage of the pressure of the claims of Canada on the part of Her Majesty’s Government commenced at an early stage; it commenced in the framing of the correspondence which led to the formation of the Commission. There was no doubt of this, and, although Sir Edward Thornton stated to the Commission that he meant that correspondence to cover the Fenian claims, yet objection was taken by the United States Commissioners; and when the American Commissioners announced that they had come to that conclusion, and when they declined to take the responsibility of receiving it as a new claim, the only course open to the British Commissioners was to report the fact to the Imperial Government, and they had to concur in the view, otherwise England would have been obliged to say, “Because you refuse to enter upon the discussion of those claims we will break off all negotiations; we decline to settle the Alabama claims and we will allow the unhappy state of affairs to continue between the two parties.”

Did the hon. gentleman mean to say that he would desire that consequence to follow? Did any one mean to say that it was not a great gain to Canada to have the Alabama claims settled? We knew perfectly well that the Fenian claims would not be pressed as a vital question as a matter of war; but that the Alabama claims could be so pressed. If any hon. member said that because the United States refused to pay the claims, England should have broken off the negotiations, he must say that that man must be utterly regardless of the interests of Canada.

If such a course had been taken the two nations would have stood in a state of positive hostility, which state would have been changed into war whenever England happened to be engaged in troubles elsewhere. What would become of Canada in case of such a war?

He did not doubt that England would be successful, and Canada as a portion of the Empire would share in the glory; but what would be the cost to Canada? Our fair fields would be made fields of blood, and our country would be ravaged, and all because at our request, and at our instance, England had refused to settle all the great causes of hostility with the United States on the ground that they would not entertain the Fenian claims. The proposition was so monstrous that he could not help but

feel that it was made in a spirit of faction, and from a desire to raise the question for party purposes. (*Cheers.*)

There was no sincerity in the motion of the hon. member for Lennox (Mr. Cartwright), and there was less in the amendment proposed by the member for Durham West (Hon. Mr. Blake). The hon. gentleman was welcome to quote the language of the Government, and he (Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald) was glad that he had taken the course of recording it in the Journals, because it would be seen that the Government of Canada had fought the battle of their people. (*Cheers.*) They had not hesitated for any fear of being attacked for disloyalty, and his hon. friend (Hon. Mr. Howe) was attacked for his strong language. They had not hesitated to say that they thought the United States had not exercised due diligence in reference to these claims, and England had not pressed with sufficient force our right to redress. They were proud of the course they had taken in making these communications to Her Majesty’s Government.

What did they say in answer? “We admit the extent of our wrongs; we admit that your country has been invaded, and your volunteers slain; we desire that you should get full redress, and we appealed to the American Government for such redress.” But when this was refused the question remained—“Shall we insist upon that redress for you, and leave the relations between England and the United States so that at any time you may be attacked? When that choice came we preferred to withdraw that claim and take the responsibility of doing so. For the sake of settling all the others, for the sake of freeing you and your country from the possibility of invasion, great as has been the wrong to you, great as is our regret at being obliged to withdraw those claims, yet we thought it better for your interests to do so.”

Her Majesty’s Government assumed all the responsibility, and at the first suggestion on our part, came forward and made the only reparation she could by becoming surety for millions, putting into the pockets of our people hundreds of thousands of dollars.

He (Hon. Sir John A. Macdonald) would say that it was the height of faction to raise this question, and it was only such folly as might be looked for from a political party fighting the battle of political despair. (*Cheers.*) He never saw a more desperate condition. They felt their position slipping away from them. Buoyed up by a temporary prosperity, by a little success in the elections, in consequence of the Premier of the day being sick in bed, and getting a majority of two in consequence of the absence of one (*Cheers*), they thought they had possession of this House and the country; but, finding that they were mistaken, in despair they attempted to get up some of the old cries in which they traded, in order to reverse their forlorn position.

It was not like the forlorn hope of the soldier, which was so full of hope of success, but it was a forlorn hope without hope. They