

the United States, until the 2nd of August next, will prevent the consideration of the establishment of free trade relations with Great Britain?

He said :—The object of the question is to ascertain whether the suspension of the conference means the tying up of domestic legislation in Canada or of legislation we may have with Great Britain.

Hon. Mr. MILLS—I do not see any connection between our trade relations with Great Britain and the negotiations with Washington. I am not at all aware that the one can have any influence on the other. It is not intended that any negotiations with the United States shall alter the policy that the government adopted with respect to Great Britain.

THE ADDRESS.

THE DEBATE CONTINUED.

The Order of the Day being called :

Resuming the adjourned debate on the consideration of His Excellency the Governor General's Speech on the opening of the fourth session of the eighth parliament.

Hon. Mr. MILLS said :—When the House rose last evening at 6 o'clock I was discussing what my hon. friend opposite, the leader of the opposition, had said in respect to the plebiscite taken upon the subject of prohibition. I did not think that there was any similarity between an election for the return of a member to the House of Commons and the vote taken to ascertain the state of public opinion upon a question relating to a proposed sumptuary law. If it becomes necessary to hold an election for a member to the House of Commons, it is necessary that there should be a member returned, a representative for the constituency that at the time was vacant. It is necessary, whether the vote be large or small, that that return should take place, and it has always been regarded in the public interest that the one who has polled the largest number of votes, whether they form a large or a small percentage of those who are entitled to the franchise, shall be returned as the representative to the legislature. But that view can have no relevancy to a vote taken in respect to the propriety of legislation upon a particular subject. Let me say to the hon. gentleman that it has not been the practice in this country, nor is it generally consistent with parliamentary govern-

ment, that a vote shall be taken upon a specific measure. The rule is that each party may state what their views are on questions of general policy, and those who are returned in the majority to the House of Commons shall exercise a controlling influence in favour of that policy to which they are committed. Now, whether the rule be a sound one or not, it was thought that that principle was not applicable to the case of a sumptuary law. In such a case, whether the measure is one which is proper to put upon a statute-book, depends largely on the state of public opinion, and whether the public will sustain such a measure by their active sympathy and support, if it should be made law. Now, the vote is taken not to decide whether prohibitory legislation is a good or a bad thing in itself, or whether it is a proper thing to adopt, but if the law can be enforced. That is a consideration upon which the people may pass by a popular vote, but it is also a consideration upon which the administration and Parliament must subsequently decide. But assuming that to be so, assuming such legislation is proper, nevertheless it is important to know whether the state of opinion in the country is such as to justify the administration in bringing such a measure forward. Now, I say, the object of the popular vote on a question of that sort is and must be mainly for the purpose of ascertaining the state of public opinion. Now, what does the vote disclose? I find that there are on the registered lists of voters 1,223,849 names. Of that number, 278,478 voted in favour of prohibition; 264,571 voted against prohibition. That is, the total vote polled was 543,049, indicating the number who are actively in favour of such a measure and the number who are actively opposed to it, the vote being taking the whole Dominion collectively together, very nearly equal. Now, I find there were 646,800 votes, not polled, a good deal more than half. I say, looking at the whole question, at the result of the vote that was taken, in my opinion it does not indicate such a state of public opinion as would warrant the government in undertaking to legislate on the subject. Then you have the further consideration that you would require in case such a vote was adopted, to alter the taxation to the amount of six or seven million dollars. You would have to remove the tax from all the prohibited articles as a source of