

Mr. MACKENZIE said that would be a matter for consideration.

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THE FISHERIES QUESTION

Hon. Sir A.T. GALT wished to know if the Government proposed to proceed with the debate on the address at once. He had given special consideration to the American question referred to in His Excellency's speech, and holding the opinion he did on the subject, it might be his duty to move for some expression of the House concerning it. The time was so short between the present moment, and that when the Commission would sit, that if any expression of the opinion of this House could have effect upon the action of the Commission, he thought it was necessary that it should be given at an early day. He did not see how it could be done at any other time than during the debate on the address. It was quite true that there would be an embarrassment felt in the absence of the correspondence asked for yesterday by the hon. member opposite, but he trusted that that embarrassment would be greatly relieved by the explanations which, he had no doubt, the hon. gentlemen in the Government would make. He might say with regard to one branch of that correspondence, he thought the Government were in a position to give it to the House before going on with the debates. He referred to that which had taken place before last year. On the 9th of March last year, copies of correspondence relating to the protection of the fisheries were asked for. On the 9th of May, he found, on the reference to the journals of the House, the Hon. Minister of Militia had brought down a short despatch from Earl Granville to the effect that a portion of the fleet in the North American waters would be detailed for the purposes of protecting the fisheries and preserving order. The despatch was very short—only some four lines. The House was told that there was other correspondence which would be brought down without delay. It was not laid before the House, however, and had not appeared during the recess. Now, he thought if that correspondence were laid before the House it would put them in possession of the facts, at any rate up to the period previous to the recent apparent change of policy on the part of the Imperial Government on this question. He hoped that the Government would see that the House was placed in possession of the correspondence, believing, as he did, that it was his duty to call attention more particularly to the circumstances attending the appointment of the Joint Commission which had been announced. The question involved in the debate was of such gravity, and was related so closely to the most important interests of this country, that he thought it would be very improper, he might say, to permit almost the only chance the House would have to express their opinion on the subject to pass without giving full consideration to it. He thought that there was no particular object in detaining the House at this moment, as the House did not know what would be the language contained in its reply to the Address.

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD said with regard to the copies of the Address, they would be laid before the House in a very short time. He would repeat to his hon. friend from Sherbrooke what he had said yesterday, that the reply would be so framed that this House would not be asked to commit themselves to the policy

of the Government. Of course they were in the hands of the House with respect to going on with the debate today or having it postponed. The discussion on the Address had now become merely formal in England, and an amendment was never moved except in the way of a vote of want of confidence. In fact, no matter what information the House might obtain by papers being laid on the table, they and the country at large would receive from the discussion expressions altogether unsatisfactory. While the Government were thankful to the hon. gentleman for Sherbrooke for his kind notice as to his intentions with respect to this matter, it was a question whether his motion would not receive more justice at the hands of the House and at his own hands if it were a substantial motion on the Orders of the Day. Those papers that the Government could with any propriety, and without decided injury to the public interests, furnish, would be laid on the table without delay, and then, of course, his hon. friend could have every opportunity to discuss the matter. If the House wished to postpone the debate till tomorrow the Government would do so.

Mr. MACKENZIE quite concurred in the desire expressed by the hon. member for Sherbrooke respecting the correspondence relative to the fisheries. He (Mr. Mackenzie) asked for it yesterday, believing that in a matter of such grave importance to our natural existence, it was exceedingly desirous, almost necessary he might say, that the House should, who had been elected, had been introduced, discuss the debate on the speech of His Excellency. The Government refused his request, though why he did not see, for the Hon. Premier intimated his intention to bring it down after the debate on the Address. If anything should constitute an exception, this case should. With regard to the general question of proceeding with the debate, he would say that unless the correspondence asked for were brought down there was no necessity for delay.

Hon. Mr. HOLTON believed that this House should follow as closely as possible the practice of the Imperial House of Commons. In that body the debate on the Queen's speech lately took place on the same day that it was delivered. If he were disposed to find any fault with the Government it would be because they did not proceed with the debate on His Excellency's address yesterday. Seeing that the Hon. Minister of Justice refused to bring down the papers in advance of the discussion, there could be no good reason why the discussion should not proceed at once.

(Applause.)

Hon. Sir A.T. GALT said that if he was to understand the Premier would afford him an opportunity after the papers were brought down, of obtaining the opinion of this House on the points he desired to bring before it, he would not stand in the way of the address.

Hon. Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD: Certainly.

Hon. Sir A. T. GALT reminded the hon. gentleman there was always a difficulty in making a substantive motion; sometimes it was got rid of by moving the previous question. He did not intend his motion should be so disposed of. He was perfectly prepared to let the matter stand over; but there were considerations higher than mere parliamentary convenience, and among them was the