

a point that was brought up in the question put by the leader of the Opposition in the House this afternoon, and that point is the matter referring to the French treaty. That treaty has now been awaiting ratification from this Government for a period of more than a year, and we would like very much to know what the policy of the Government is. When we ask that question from the Government, however, we are probably asking more than they know themselves. It would seem, from their attitude, and from their conduct throughout, that this is a problem that they are incapable of grappling with. It is not a very important treaty. The Minister of Justice very happily characterized it the other night as being a "little French treaty." It is a little French treaty, involving interests of no very great importance, and yet I repeat, Sir, that the Government seem unable to give to the country the policy which they intend to pursue upon this question, and, in fact, they seem to be uncertain in their own minds as to what they shall do. I think, that for the sake of consistency and for the sake of self-respect, the Government should place themselves in a position whereby the people would know what their policy is to be on this question, and they should at once announce what they intend to do. No doubt they are surrounded by many difficulties. They have on the one hand, the opposition that evidently is an overwhelming one from the public with regard to the ratification of this treaty. On the other hand, it is intimated—I do not know with how good a foundation—that pressure has been brought to bear upon them in certain high quarters. It is asserted that the High Commissioner for Canada has taken them by the throat and demanded that this treaty be ratified; that he pins his reputation to this treaty; and that if the treaty is not ratified he will become an enemy of the Government. It is represented that a relative of the High Commissioner, an hon. gentleman who is a member of this House and a member of the Government, and who is a loyal son of the High Commissioner, has also threatened resignation, and threatened to make all the trouble that he possibly can for the Government, if the demands of his father are not acceded to, and his reputation maintained, so far as it can be, by the ratification of this treaty. Now, Sir, the country and the press are talking about these things, and in this matter the Government occupy a humiliating position. They are accused of vacillation; they are accused of indecision, of lacking the courage to come to a decision. It is said that they feel loath to ratify the treaty. Why do they not express their views and set the public mind at rest with regard to this question? Now, Mr. Speaker, the Opposition has always been generous and forbearing enough to come to the rescue of the Government when it has been necessary to do so to save the honour of Canada—and the honour of Canada

is somewhat bound up and imperilled in this matter by the action of the Government. I would therefore suggest to the Government that they take the course which they have pursued on other occasions when difficult questions have demanded solution and they have felt unable to grapple with them. They have a remedy, a remedy which they have themselves invented, and which might be applied to this case as well as to the case of prohibition and the case of the Caron charges. Let them refer the French treaty to a royal commission, and they can easily arrange the matter in such a way that the decision of that commission shall not be made this century if necessary. In that way they could bring their difficulties to an end; the French treaty question would be disposed of, and they would avoid the decision of the question which some day they will have to make unless they refer it to a royal commission. If my hon. friend, the leader of the Government, will take into consideration this proposition and appoint a royal commission to settle this difficulty, it is not likely that the question will again trouble him so long as he is in office. I think I may most unhesitatingly commend this solution of the difficulty to the hon. gentleman. He will then dispose of the threats of the High Commissioner; he will dispose of the insubordination of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries; and he will dispose of all the conflicting elements of his party, asking for and contending against the ratification of this treaty. He will then get the question set at rest, so that it will not rise like Banquo's ghost to disturb him in his slumbers as it now does.

Mr. MILLS (Bothwell). It is not my intention, Sir, to trouble the House but for a few moments on the subject of this Speech. I think it would have been satisfactory to the House, and would have greatly facilitated the work of the session, if the hon. gentlemen on the other side had undertaken to defend the various propositions which they have put forward in the Speech. They have in some degree challenged the Opposition to consider several propositions, which, after that challenge has been accepted, they have themselves resiled from defending. Now, Sir, the Government have told us in this Speech that the country is in a prosperous condition. It has been pointed out that that is not an accurate statement—that the country is far from being prosperous; that many classes of the population, particularly the mercantile and agricultural classes, are suffering at the present time from serious financial embarrassment; that the income of the agricultural population has largely diminished; that greatly as it had diminished during previous years, it has during the past year, since the House was in session before, diminished at least 40 per cent. Now, Sir, the Opposition were ready to consider and controvert the propositions put in the mouth