

of coercion which the then Conservative leader was adopting—bring about an agreement between the provinces in regard to the enactment of an unemployment insurance measure, as we have since succeeded in doing.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Did the right hon. gentleman ever say that to Colonel Harrington after the election?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Just a moment, my hon. friend; I am coming to that. It must be remembered that Colonel Harrington is not inexperienced in public affairs. As my hon. friend has pointed out, he was premier of Nova Scotia, and he has had long experience in public life. Colonel Harrington does not need to take any political lessons from me, either in the matter of constitutional procedure or as to personal behaviour. I think he understands these matters quite as well as I do. For that matter neither do I feel that I have anything in particular to learn from him as to what is appropriate in such circumstances.

That was the position during the 1935 campaign. When the election was over, the question that to my mind was most important of all was the matter of getting an agreement between this country and the United States with respect to reciprocity in trade, and I took the very first opportunity to endeavour to bring about such an agreement. That was the first matter to which I and the government gave attention, and it involved, as the correspondence which my hon. friend has read bears out by inference, that I had to be absent from Ottawa part of the time in connection with those reciprocity negotiations. I must confess that I was a little surprised to receive the particular communication from Mr. Harrington which my hon. friend has read. I can perhaps best express the reason for my surprise by a reference to what Colonel Harrington said in his last communication. If I recollect aright, his words were something to this effect: "I am going to resign in order to leave the government free to take what action it thinks proper."

Why was that step taken by Colonel Harrington three months after the present administration came into office, rather than on the first day that the Liberal administration took office? That was the step Colonel Harrington knew was the correct one to take in view of the fact that the government which had been returned had said that the whole legislation was unconstitutional and that it would pay no attention to the legislation until it had been referred to the courts and a decision had been rendered. Colonel Harrington's proper course was to have said at once, "I tender my resignation to the

government so that it may be perfectly free and not embarrassed in dealing with this matter." Instead a letter was written to embarrass me. That was the reason for the letter, and that was why no answer was given to it. What Colonel Harrington was looking for was some word from the Prime Minister which would enable him to say that before the matter had been referred to the courts Mackenzie King had dismissed him as chairman of the commission. I was not going to be placed in that position, and I let Colonel Harrington know it. I did not do that by correspondence, as my hon. friend says, but I sent word to him. This whole matter was five years ago; I cannot remember the details, but I have a recollection that I telephoned Colonel Harrington myself and said to him that I had these important negotiations under way with the United States, and that I had other matters to deal with that were more important than the questions he had raised, so his matter would have to stand. At any rate that word was sent to him; whether by myself over the telephone or whether by someone in my office under my direction I cannot say at the moment. But Colonel Harrington understood, just as well as I understood, that the government had no intention of dealing with the legislation other than by referring it to the supreme court, and then taking action after the supreme court had given its decision.

I could elaborate on this matter further if it were desirable to do so, but I can assure my hon. friend that no discourtesy to Colonel Harrington was intended. As a matter of fact, if there was discourtesy at all, to my mind it was in the circumstance that Colonel Harrington, knowing the position in which I was placed as Prime Minister of a government that had been returned in opposition to the legislation that had put him in office, did not immediately tender his resignation to me instead of waiting for three months to take that step.

All of this stuff that was recorded—and I call it that, because it really was nothing more than stuff—was pure bluff. Colonel Harrington knew as well as any hon. member in this house knows, that to go ahead to proceed with the appointment of clerks, and the setting up of machinery, and all that sort of thing, when the matter was to be referred to the supreme court before further action was taken, was not the kind of procedure which he or anybody else would be justified in taking, at all.

And may I point this out, as well. The Department of Labour was the department which had to do with these matters though the commission was to report to the president