

one. In that respect we will let the future speak for itself. I may say to the hon. gentleman that I do not attach much faith to his predictions, for I think I have often heard him in this House indulge in predictions which have not been verified. The hon. gentleman says that we are asking for unrestricted reciprocity with the United States and that this is the chief plank of our platform. He says that we are asking the support and confidence of the country upon that ground, and yet after that declaration he tells us that he does not know what our policy is, and he asks us to define for his information the policy to which we adhere. He says the country is against our policy, but he does not know what it is. The hon. gentleman told us that, a few years ago, Sir Charles Tupper made an attempt to negotiate a treaty of reciprocity with the United States, and that Mr. Bayard, the predecessor of Mr. Blaine in office, refused to entertain any proposition for negotiation. I do not think that the hon. gentleman in making that statement was quite candid with the House. The hon. gentleman knows very well that when Sir Charles Tupper proposed what he called an unrestricted offer of reciprocity, he proposed it as part of a scheme for the settlement of the dispute with regard to our fisheries, with regard to the extent of these fisheries and the interest that the American people had a right to claim under the Convention of 1818. The Government of the United States on that occasion informed him, as we all well understood, that they would not undertake the negotiation of any commercial arrangement in connection with any part of that settlement instead of dealing directly with the question, and interpreting by mutual agreement if possible, the right of the respective Governments under the Treaty of 1818. That was a wholly different proposition from the one which the hon. gentleman would lead us to suppose that Mr. Bayard had made. Mr. Bayard did not say that he would not undertake negotiations with regard to the commercial arrangements between the two countries, but he did say that he would not undertake them as the means of putting in abeyance a dispute between the two countries with reference to the fisheries. Now, Sir, the right hon. gentleman has told us that we have not faith in the future of Canada and that this is one of the reasons of our failure. That is not the fact. We have faith in the future of this country: we think it a great misfortune that the affairs of our country have not been in more competent hands: we believe that the condition of the country shows what it has suffered in this particular, but it is not a want of faith in the country we have exhibited, it is a want of faith in the gentlemen who sit on the Treasury benches, a want of faith in the capacity and zeal and fitness of the hon. gentlemen for the positions which they hold. The hon. gentleman has said that we have bewailed the dissolution. We have not done so. We have said that the dissolution of Parliament was a gross violation of the principles and conventions of the constitution. We still adhere to that proposition, and I think there will be very little difficulty in showing to this House, and in convincing the country, that when hon. gentlemen advised His Excellency to dissolve Parliament they advised a course which was entirely at variance with the spirit of the constitution under which we live. We have only to look at the 50th article of the British North

America Act to see that it is declared that the Commons of Canada shall be elected for a period of five years. It is true that this is subject to the prerogative of the Crown to dissolve Parliament: it is subject to a power which in its terms is absolute, but the power of dissolution is not arbitrary: it is a power that is to be exercised according to the rules and principles of our constitution. The hon. gentleman knows that in this respect it does not differ from any other prerogative possessed by the Crown. It is in the power of the Crown to refuse assent to, or to reserve for the assent of Her Majesty, every measure that is carried through this House, but if His Excellency the Governor General, acting under the powers conferred upon him as representative of the Crown under the 55th article of the British North America Act, should disallow every Act or reserve every Act that is carried through this Parliament, every one knows that if such a course were adopted it would be a gross violation of our constitutional rights and privileges, although it would be in strict accordance with the letter of the constitution. When we look at the provisions of our constitutional system and the practices that have occurred under it, we find that the power of dissolution is a harmonizing power. It is conferred for a special purpose. It is conferred for the purpose of bringing into harmony the different powers of the State when the powers of the State differ from each other. Take, for instance, the differences which may arise between the Crown and the House of Commons. If differences should arise the power of dissolution may be exercised for the purpose of bringing the advisers of the Crown and the House of Commons into harmony again. But I would ask any hon. gentleman upon the Treasury benches to mention in the whole history of England where there has been a single case of an Administration dissolving Parliament when that Administration enjoyed the confidence of the House of Commons and when no conflict had arisen between the two Houses of Parliament. Let us take the instances which have occurred in English parliamentary history. In 1784 the Crown, upon the advice of Mr. Pitt the younger, dissolved Parliament. Under what circumstances was Parliament dissolved? Pitt did so when the House of Commons refused supplies, when the India Bill was defeated, and when a large number of the House had again and again voted against him, but when he was defeated by a majority of one he appealed to the country and the country sustained the dissolution. There was in this case a difference of opinion between the advisers of the Crown and the House of Commons, and it was for the purpose of bringing these two into harmony again that the dissolution took place. Take again the case of 1834 when William IV dismissed the Melbourne Administration and formed a Government under Peel. A dissolution took place then, and why? Because the Government that the King had constituted was in a minority and did not enjoy the confidence of Parliament. The election was brought about for the purpose of bringing the House of Commons into harmony with the Administration for the time being. We find in every case that the prerogative of dissolution is exercised for this purpose. It is not a fact that the Crown has an arbitrary discretion in this matter. It is true that if the Crown dissolves Parliament upon the advice of the Administration the Administration is responsible for