

being a stranger to the greater number of them. I fully realize how little equal I am to the task I have had the honour of being intrusted with, and how impossible it is for me to do it justice : but I know that I find myself again in the midst of old friends of both sides of the House, and that they will forgive me if I cannot as I might discharge the task which I thought I should accept in the name of those who have again honoured me with such a flattering token of their confidence, in sending me back to represent them in Parliament. My task is not easy after the brilliant speech which you have just heard from my hon. friend, and if I only took counsel of my own judgment, I would rest satisfied with applauding the fine language and noble sentiments which we have just heard. The first paragraph of the Speech from the Throne congratulates Parliament on the general prosperity of Canada. In order to ascertain how prosperous a country is, it is necessary to refer to this great commercial barometer, its deposit account in the banks, and the amount to the credit of its people in the savings banks. It must not be forgotten that for the four years which immediately preceded last, the crops failed in the greatest part of the country, and that all the industries suffered therefrom. But this did not prevent the commercial bank deposits and the deposits in savings banks to increase yearly. I consider our country as one of the most prosperous in the world. We have not, it is true, such colossal fortunes as are found among our neighbours and elsewhere, but, on the other hand, there is not to be found here such black misery as is met with in those countries. If we compare the great American centres with ours, we see that since the inauguration of the National Policy all the advantages are on our side, and any one who visits our cities or rural districts can convince himself that our people are prosperous and happy. I may be told perhaps that our population has not increased as much as might have been expected. It is true, but it has been the same with our neighbours, and we are not the only ones which were disappointed by the last census. They were as much disappointed as we. The fact is that our showing is better than that of the States of New England, where, instead of increasing, the population has actually decreased. His Excellency continues by congratulating us for the first time for several years, upon the abundant harvest with which every part of the country was blessed by Providence. It is a great gratification for those who are interested in the agriculture, the commerce and the industries of the country ; and if Providence continues for some years to favour us as it has during the last, our industries and our commerce will take a new stride forward, and our prosperity increase as well. We have learned, Mr. Speaker, with a feeling of profound grief, the premature and lamentable death of the one who, in the natural order of things, was one day to reign over the British Empire, and was to be our sovereign. I know that I but echo the sentiments of the hon. gentlemen of this House, and of the French Canadians of the Dominion of Canada, whom no other nationality outdoes in loyalty and attachment to their sovereign and the British Crown, when I repeat that which has been so well said by my hon. friend, the mover of the Address. Our most sincere sympathy with Her Majesty and their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, in their

Mr. BAIN (Soulanges).

grief upon this lamentable occasion, have found expression in all parts of the Dominion. Another passage in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, refers to the difficulties which for a number of years have existed in regard to the Behring Sea. We learn with much satisfaction, Mr. Speaker, that the question for some time under discussion between the Government of Her Majesty and that of the United States, concerning the fur seal fisheries, is on the point of an amicable settlement by arbitration. This will be of great importance as it will remove a source of contention between the two nations. It is highly necessary that this settlement should take place, because we have the greatest interests at stake, not only through British Columbia, but also owing to the fact that every year a large number of vessels from the eastern provinces go and fish for seal in Behring Sea, which they reach by way of Cape Horn, and that a certain number of these vessels have been seized and confiscated with their contents by the American revenue cutters. It is a well-known fact that the United States were the first to resent and protest against the pretensions of the Russians, who before 1825 claimed the exclusive right of fishing in the Behring Sea within a hundred miles of the shore. As the shores on both side belonged to Russia, it meant the exclusion of all the other nations from that part of the Pacific Ocean. However, by a treaty made with the United States in 1825, and another with the British Government in the same year, she waived her rights. And why were these treaties made? Because Russia understood that its contentions were untenable. However, after having bought from Russia Alaska and the neighboring islands, including the Pribyloff group, composed of the islands of St. George and St. Paul, which are the most frequented by the fur seal, the Americans forbade the entrance of Behring Sea, although that sea is six or seven hundred miles wide. Let me tell you, by the way, that in making this purchase for \$7,200,000, they made as good a bargain as we did when we bought the territories of the North-West, since the right of fishing for the fur seal on the Pribyloff Islands gives them more than sufficient to pay the interest on the purchase money, while there are, on the other hand, gold mines in Alaska, one of which yields more than \$1,000,000 per annum. Forgive me the digression. I was saying that the United States, after having bought this territory, had set up the same pretensions which Russia had, by claiming in virtue of the purchase treaty with Russia, the exclusive right of fishing in the Behring Sea. This is why I am happy to see that this source of dissension is soon to be removed. And I hope that the investigations to be made and the judgment to be rendered by the arbitrators will bring about a just and equitable settlement of this long-pending difficulty. I see with pleasure that upon the invitation of the Government at Washington, our Ministers went to confer with the representatives of that Government, and have reached an amicable arrangement of several questions of the highest importance to the country. The first to be mentioned is the determining of the boundary of Alaska. A few years ago there was an impression that this part of our territories was of no value, and was, in fact, but a country of ice and snow-clad mountains. But the surveys made in that part of our territory estab-