

ADDRESS IN ANSWER TO HIS EXCELLENCY'S SPEECH.

The House resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of Mr. Bertram for an Address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his Speech at the opening of the session.

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, in some respects the position assumed by the First Minister on Friday last is unique in the history of this Parliament. I suppose not the most cynical Grit sitting opposite to me would arise in his place and deny that it is of the utmost importance that a public man who leads a great party in this country, whose record extends through many years of opposition to a Government whose policy he did not approve of, and who had made public and repeated pledges to the electorate at various times and in various places—that it is, I say, of the utmost importance that a public man under these circumstances should honestly and thoroughly keep his pledges, and when he came to power, if to power he came, by virtue of the suffrages of the electors, that he should, as the leader of a Government and entrusted with power to carry out the policy which he had previously advocated, at least keep faith with the electorate and carry out those policies which he had deliberately and repeatedly promised from time to time when he was seeking the suffrages of the people. If that be true—and I think both sides of this House will agree in maintaining it—the leader of the Government, now that he has been a year and a half in power, and able to embody his policy in the active work of administration and in public enactment, must have expected to be called upon to listen to a criticism of that eighteen months, and must have felt that it was his duty to have answered the chief points in that criticism. But, Sir, instead of that, the hon. gentleman seems to have been surprised—more than that, to have been somewhat galled. He seems to have felt that it was almost treasonable that my friend the leader of the Opposition should have pretended to call him to account for his one and a half years of stewardship—should have placed before him the pledges he had made, and pointed out their non-fulfilment, and urged with force and strength and logic the position of the Government as against that of the Opposition in this respect. But, Sir, my hon. friend, as I said, appears to have been surprised that such should have been even thought of: and it did seem to me, when he arose and accused my hon. friend of being in an angry and disappointed mood, that he himself offered to this House a spectacle of almost childish anger in the position he took with reference to the criticism that had been made. The hon. gentleman must not allow the adulations and honours which have been his

Mr. SIFTON.

meed for some eighteen months now, to lead him to suppose that he is above criticism, or that, when he takes his place in this House, he is not to stand on a level with every other representative man, and give reasons for his actions, and reply to charges which are made against him. If he does have that idea, the sooner he divests himself of it the better. Now, Sir, what did the hon. gentleman give as a reply to the able and exhaustive, and I am bound to say, the temperate arraignment by my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition of his policy during the last eighteen months as compared with the pledges of seventeen years? He commenced by showing his anger, and by administering what he supposed was a severe, but what seemed to me to be a somewhat childish castigation to my hon. friend. He then went on to boast of many things that had been done, without thinking it worth while to prove one of them. He made a meagre and somewhat unfortunate statement as to the proposed Yukon deal. That, he declared, was after all but a temporary measure, intended to get in supplies for next winter. He gave a confused and altogether inadequate explanation of the position he took in Great Britain with reference to preferential trade, on which point he was most strongly arraigned by my hon. friend, and will be held to account in this country from one end of it to the other.

And then, like a good general—no, Sir, but like a man who aspires to be a general, and has never studied the true tactics and science of war, he seeks by a display of rockets and fireworks to divert the attention of his own followers, at least, from the paucity and meagreness of the reply which he has made to the criticisms passed upon him. It is just as if he had a guest who came to him in the morning, stayed with him all day, and got neither dinner nor supper, but whom, late at night, the hon. gentleman took to the door of his hospitable home, put a Roman candle in his hand, touch it off, and as his guest of the day saw it splutter and explode and watched the green and blue lights far off in the heaven, said to him: Au revoir, monsieur, you must now consider you have had an excellent dinner and a good substantial supper, and I wish you a pleasant night's sleep. Well, that is all the right hon. gentleman's followers got from him. Are the hon. gentlemen who sit beside my right hon. friend satisfied with that answer of their leader?

An hon. MEMBER. Yes.

Mr. FOSTER. One man—one man out of the whole following is satisfied, and he a Minister of the Crown. Well, Sir, if the party opposite is satisfied with that answer of the leader, the Opposition on this side can afford to be thoroughly satisfied.

But I propose, even though I have to