

for the fourth or fifth time now that the policy of the Opposition upon this question is simply this: That, while asserting that the treaty is a surrender of most valuable rights that belong to Canada, still, it is the duty of Canadians to adopt this treaty, because it will put an end to a most dangerous state of things. That is the only reason we have to advance for the course which we propose to take on this occasion. The treaty is a concession of rights that belong to us, that should have been retained to us; but still, Sir, in face of the dangerous aspect which events have taken, it is better to adopt the treaty and have this vexed question settled forever. We agree altogether on this side of the House with the statements which were made the other day by the Minister of Finance when introducing this question, that the greatest calamity which could befall the civilised world would be an armed collision between the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race. When we consider that England and the United States to-day are the two foremost among civilised nations, that their trade exceeds the trade of all other nations, we are appalled at the results that would follow an armed collision between those two nations. I say further, it would not only be a fratricidal war, but it would be almost as criminal and as guilty as a civil war. There is no reason whatever why the two branches of the English-speaking race, the United States and Canada and England, should ever come to war, and if such an event were ever to take place I would look upon it, and everybody would look upon it, as the greatest catastrophe which could befall the civilised world. The position of things in reference to this question was such that an actual war between England and the United States was neither a remote nor an impossible contingency. Much more, Mr. Speaker, we were already threatened with imminent commercial war. A Bill had been passed by the American Congress which empowered the President at any moment to close all commercial relations between the United States and Canada. We all agree with the language of the Minister of Finance upon this question when, speaking upon the probable result of such a commercial war, he said:

"I need not tell you that that Bill meant commercial war, that it meant not only the ordinary suspension of friendly feeling and intercourse between two countries, but that it announced much more than that. If that Bill had been brought into operation by the proclamation of the President of the United States, I have no hesitation in saying that we stood in a relation to that great country of commercial war, and the line is very narrow which separates a commercial war between two countries from an actual war."

That was the position with which we were face to face and that is the position which this treaty would put an end to. Now, Sir, what was the cause of that unfortunate condition of things, that prospect of war between the two nations? The cause was no other than the harassing policy which had been followed by the present Government with regard to American fishermen. There was no other cause. It is to be noted that the American Government did not contend for an extension of their powers under the treaty. The hon. gentleman said a moment ago that the American Government had advanced contentions from which they have receded under the present treaty, that they had contended under the treaty for the right to purchase bait. Nothing of the kind. I take direct issue with the right hon. gentleman, and I say unhesitatingly that the American Government never contended that under the treaty they had a right to purchase bait, and that point cannot be made clearer than by the language of the President himself when transmitting the treaty to the Senate. This is what he said:

"The right of our fishermen under the Treaty of 1818 did not extend to the procurement of distinctive fishery supplies in Canadian ports and harbors; and one item supposed to be essential, to wit, bait, was plainly denied them by the explicit and definite words of the Treaty of 1818, emphasized by the course of the negotiations and expressed decisions which preceded the conclusion of that treaty."

Mr. LAURIER.

So, Mr. Speaker, the statement of the right hon. gentleman that the Americans, under the treaty, yield any of their former pretensions, falls to the ground. They get everything, we receive nothing in exchange. As I said, the cause which produced this unfriendly feeling between the two countries, the cause which threatened us with retaliation was the policy followed by the present Government with regard to American fishermen. We have been told to-day that the American fishermen were not subjected to any harassing process, that it was only the smuggler, only the poacher who complained and who was ever complaining under such circumstances. But that is not the view taken by the American Government. The American Government did not take the view that it was only the poacher and the smuggler that were harassed by the regulations of the Government; on the contrary they took the ground that the policy of the Canadian Government had been harassing in every instance. Again I cite from the Message of the President:

"The history of events in the last two years show that no feature of Canadian administration was more harassing and injurious than the compulsion upon our fishing vessels to make formal entry and clearance on every occasion of temporarily seeking shelter in Canadian ports and harbors."

It was these customs regulations touching American fishing vessels, compelling them to make entries and clearances on every occasion, which harassed the American fishermen and created intense indignation, that resulted at length in the retaliation Bill. Take the Bill itself. What is the ground of the Bill? The ground is that American fishermen are harassed and oppressed by Canadian authorities, and the ground upon which the President was authorised to close commercial intercourse between the United States and Canada was simply this fact, that American fishermen were harassed and oppressed by Canadian authorities. The language of the Bill makes this very clear. It states:

"That whenever the President of the United States shall be satisfied that American fishermen are visiting or being in the waters or at any ports or places of the British dominions of North America, are or then lately have been denied or abridged in the enjoyment of any rights secured to them by treaty or law, or are or they lately have been unjustly vexed or harassed in the enjoyment of such rights, or subjected to unreasonable restrictions, regulations or requirements in respect to such rights; or otherwise unjustly vexed or harassed in said waters, ports or places, or whenever the President of the United States shall be satisfied that any such fishing vessels or fishermen having a permit under the laws of the United States to touch and trade at any port or ports, place or places, in the British dominions of North America, are or then lately have been denied the privilege of entering such port or ports, place or places, in the same manner and under the same regulations as may exist therein applicable to trading vessels of the most favored nations, or shall be unjustly vexed or harassed in respect thereof, or otherwise be unjustly vexed or harassed therein, or shall be prevented from purchasing such supplies as may there be lawfully sold to trading vessels of the most favored nation; or whenever the President of the United States shall be satisfied that any other vessels of the United States, their masters or crews so arriving at or being in such British waters or ports or places in the British dominions of North America, are or then lately have been denied any of the privileges therein accorded to the vessels, their masters or crews of the most favored nation or unjustly vexed or harassed in respect of the same, or unjustly vexed or harassed therein by the authorities thereof, then, and in either or all of such cases it shall be lawful and it shall be the duty of the President of the United States in his discretion."

This is the whole tenor of the Bill; there is no other ground for authorising the President to come to that unfortunate conclusion except this one fact, that American fishermen had been lately harassed by Canadian authorities. The retaliation Bill was passed, and then we had to face that most deplorable condition that perhaps at any moment the President would issue a proclamation which at once would close our ports to all trade between the two nations. The prospects were simply alarming when we consider the amount of trade done day after day between the two nations, a trade involving millions and millions of dollars for exports and imports, and we can well conceive that if that proclamation had been put in force by the President its effect would have reached every Canadian family and per-