

and thirty-seven branches of manufactures. It will, therefore, be seen that the position that the Government takes is entirely borne out by the speech made by Sir John Macdonald in Toronto last week, when he said that the Government would stand by the policy introduced by the Conservative party in 1878. It is believed, however, that it is possible for a fair reciprocal arrangement to be arrived at which might be conducive to, not subversive of, the interests of our manufacturers."

Now, Sir, subsequent events, I think, point clearly to the fact that the Government were not actuated, in the dissolution of this House in February last, by any such motives as they claim. I think, when we come to examine the facts, we will see that the dissolution of the last House, even in view of the initiation of reciprocity negotiations, was entirely unnecessary. The Government tell us that they intended to appoint a commission to proceed to Washington, and their organ makes a statement of the fact that Congress ceased to exist on 4th March last, and it wished to send a delegation to Washington for the purpose of an informal conference with the American authorities. Now, Sir, this dissolution took place one year in advance of the time that the life of this Parliament would expire, and more. The Government, on three successive occasions, has trampled upon the constitutional rights of this House in cutting short the life of Parliament. The last three Parliaments have aggregated a period of twelve years, when they should have aggregated a period of fifteen years, and the Government, on these three occasions, has allowed political expediency to override the constitutional privileges of the people. Its action upon the last occasion was peculiarly aggravated, for the reason that the constitution provides that at the end of every decennial census there shall be a redistribution of seats in this House, and if this House had been allowed to run its natural term of days the Government could have held a session last winter, they could have held a short session after the population returns were received from the census now being taken, they could have assembled the House and have made a redistribution of seats, and then dissolved the House, and still they would have been in ample time for the negotiations at Washington; because the term of the last Congress ceased on 4th March last, and the next session of Congress will meet on the first Monday of December next, and during all the coming summer and autumn the Government could have pursued its informal negotiations with the Government at Washington. The submission or ratification of a treaty could not be proceeded with, or even formal negotiations entered upon, before Congress assembles, for the President of the United States has not the power to appoint commissioners without the consent of Congress, and only after Congress met on the first Monday of December would the President be able to appoint commissioners to meet our commissioners, and after a treaty had been negotiated it would have to be submitted to the Senate of the United States for ratification, as well as to the Canadian Parliament, so that, months after the meeting of Congress, we would have had an opportunity of passing upon a treaty with a new Parliament elected according to the constitution, and after the expiration of the time of the old Parliament, which was cut short of its life by the action of the Government.

The reason, then, assigned by the Government for this dissolution is not the true reason. It is

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an insult to the intelligence of the country to tell the people that Parliament was dissolved in order to have a Parliament elected that could deal with reciprocal arrangements, in view of the fact that nothing could be formally done until after the meeting of Congress next December and the appointment of commissioners by the United States. Subsequent events strengthened this conclusion. The elections were held on 5th March. The House met here on 29th April. In the meantime commissioners had been sent to Washington. They did not proceed there exactly in an official character, at all events they were not received in an official capacity; they could not have been received in an official capacity. Of course, they might go there and talk over matters informally with Mr. Blaine, or with anyone they chose to talk with in Washington; but they could not act as formal plenipotentiaries, as commissioners charged with negotiating a treaty with the representatives of the United States. They were powerless to do so and had no such function. So this was merely a by-play, another act in this drama of sham for the purpose of convincing the country that the Government meant something when it dissolved Parliament: that it was for the purpose of appealing to the people on this question of reciprocity and laying the result of its negotiations before a Parliament that was not a moribund Parliament. No, Sir; the object of this dissolution was simply to forestall public opinion. We had in Canada a question of momentous importance under discussion. It was being considered by the people, the people were interested in the discussion, it was a matter of vast importance to the people. And if the Government of the day had had due care for the interests of the people, if it had desired to promote their interests and consult their will, it would have allowed full time to consider definitely and fully the important proposition before them. But the Government chose not to permit the people of Canada to examine into the arguments *pro* and *con* with respect to this policy that it was proposed to adopt to further the interests of the Dominion: on the contrary it proceeded to dissolve Parliament abruptly, and appealed to the people for the purpose of securing a snap judgment, and for the purpose, as I have said, of forestalling public opinion.

So now we are here to consider this question: we are here if possible to probe this matter to the bottom, to examine as to what the actual motives of the Government were, and to ask the Government what it intends to do in the premises. Those hon. gentlemen have pretended to be in favour of reciprocity and have gone to the country on the question. On this side of the House there are a certain number of gentlemen in favour of reciprocity, elected as favourable to reciprocity—reciprocity of the unrestricted character. On that side of the House there are a number of members elected on a sort of *quasi*-reciprocity platform. They adopted that platform, and they led their constituents to believe that the Government meant to obtain reciprocity, that the Government was honest in its desire to obtain reciprocity, and that if elected, the Government were as likely to obtain it as would be the Opposition if they were placed in power; and thus in this House there is a great majority of members elected either directly as supporters of reciprocity or as supporters of the Govern-