

Some comment was made both on the floor of the House of Commons and in the party press on the conspiracy of silence so called to describe the reluctance on the part of the government at Ottawa to carry on a debate on the Address. The Speech from the Throne may or may not outline the government programme during the session. There is no law to compel the government to show their hand in a public speech, and as a rule the speeches from the throne in this country have consisted of mere generalities and the really important measures of each session since Confederation have generally been those which were not mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. What happened in the present case? The Address was moved and seconded in the ordinary way, and then the leader of the Opposition rose and made his criticism and offered any remarks that occurred to him. To these the Prime Minister replied. Now if there was to be anything in the nature of a debate one would think that the position of the Prime Minister required a reply from the most prominent member of the Opposition aside from the leader himself. In some ways Mr. Monk was last session the most prominent man, in as much as he was a provincial leader; but this session he occupied a somewhat anomalous position, having resigned his leadership and returned to the ranks. Nevertheless he was asked by Mr. Borden, the leader, to follow Sir Wilfrid Laurier and then, when some member on the government side had replied to Mr. Monk, Mr. Haggart, an ex-cabinet minister, was to be the next speaker on the Conservative side. That programme would have looked like a debate clothed with some dignity and adhering to the traditions of the House of Commons. But what happened? Mr. Monk in the end refused to speak. That disconcerted Mr. Haggart to a certain extent so that he was not ready at the moment to rise, and so the whole thing fell to pieces and Mr. W. F. Maclean took the floor and talked about almost everything under the sun except the contents of the Speech from the Throne. It could not be expected that any person on the ministerial side would reply to Mr. Maclean be-

cause there was practically nothing to reply to. Then Mr. Casgrain, a prominent member of the Opposition, introduced a subject, the organization of the League Nationale. The League Nationale was certainly not mentioned in the Speech from the Throne nor anything which could lead up to it, any more than was the subject of the position of Liberal lawyers who were members of the House and who acted as advisers or promoters of schemes before the government. As no person, therefore, was debating the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne the government was forced to remain silent. No government ever existed, the members of which could keep their seats when the Opposition dealt them hard blows. For instance, if Mr. Bennett, instead of incorporating certain accusations in a general speech had a real case against a ministerial supporter it would be expected that he would formulate the charge so that it could be acted on. When he neglected to do so the House did not take the matter seriously. The Opposition know very well that the debate fizzled out not because the government remained silent but because there was no attack.

Mr. A. J. S. Copp, the member in the House of Commons for Digby, N. S., has repelled the accusation brought against him by Mr. Bennett, the member for East Simcoe, to which we alluded last week. The charge was that Mr. Copp had made a bargain with the town council of Digby "to use his position as a member of parliament to get a large grant for the construction of a dock in that town and he was paid \$500 on account and was to be paid \$2,000 more on the completion of the dock." Mr. Copp made a statement on the floor of the House which seems to completely dispose of Mr. Bennett's accusation and the member for East Simcoe must either withdraw the charge and apologize publicly or he must accept Mr. Copp's challenge to bring the matter before the Committee on Privileges and Elections. From Mr. Copp's explanation and from the records it appears that the citizens of the town of Digby and the Council composed of Liberals and Conservatives indif-

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