

not, and that no other members of this House and none outside were so consulted?

Mr. FIELDING. There is nothing new or novel about this matter. It is not one which has been sprung upon the House. Many months ago it was announced that negotiations had been entered upon between this government and the President of the United States regarding commercial relations. A certain arrangement was made for the moment which was brought before this House. That arrangement was condemned by a number of hon. gentlemen opposite, but they never had the courage to record their votes against it. That was an arrangement made to serve the purpose for the moment, and then there was an exchange of letters which expressed the desire of the President of the United States and the willingness of the government of Canada to have further negotiations looking to a reciprocal arrangement. All that was known for months, and what we are presenting is merely a consummation of an arrangement which has been under negotiation for a long time.

Mr. CURRIE (Simcoe). The hon. minister has not answered the question.

Mr. FIELDING. If I had correspondence with any member of this House with regard to any matter, which correspondence that member and myself saw fit to treat as confidential, I deny the right of the hon. gentleman to put to me any question about it.

Mr. CURRIE (Simcoe). I rise to a point of order. The hon. minister has not answered the question.

Mr. SPEAKER. No minister or member is required to answer a question.

Mr. MACDONELL. I would like an answer to the question I have put, which is very simple. I understand that when these negotiations were entered upon, the Liberal members of this House were written to for their opinions, but no request of the kind was made to the Conservative members, nor was the public taken into the confidence of the government.

Mr. FIELDING. Again I say that it is my right and privilege to have correspondence with members of this House; and if any member receives a letter from me and sends me a reply and he and I see fit to treat that correspondence as confidential, I deny the right of any member to raise any question about it.

I do not want to enter into the merits of this whole matter because this is not the moment to do so. This motion is only a species of side show.

Mr. HUGHES. It is a side show motion which seems to worry the hon. minister.

Mr. MACDONELL.

Mr. FIELDING. I do not worry over this annexation bogey. I think that the reply given the other day by the Prime Minister very aptly fits the interruption. If the worst should come to the worst, we may send the gallant colonel to Washington, and if he will only bring Turpin with him the country will be safe. I notice that my hon. friends opposite quote everything they can find in the United States papers in favour of reciprocity and annexation. The hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) had a good deal to say about a resolution by Mr. Bennett, a member of Congress from the state of New York. Mr. Bennett moved a resolution in favour of annexation, and my hon. friend concluded that Mr. Bennett must be in collusion with the Prime Minister of this country and the other members of the Liberal party. He, however, forgot to state one fact, namely, that Mr. Bennett has two fads at Washington, one of which is to talk annexation, and the other, and the most important, is to defeat this reciprocity agreement. The very man who is promoting annexation recognizes the fact that in this commercial agreement there is not a shadow of annexation, and he takes the view no doubt that should we have liberal commercial relations with our brethren to the south, that will make for a happy, contented and prosperous people on both sides, and when our people are in that enviable condition they will not be anxious for any political change.

Mr. HUGHES. Is it possible that Canada might follow the lead of a distinguished Canadian who dealt with that same question some years ago, and not make two bites of a cherry?

Mr. FIELDING. Does my hon. friend refer to Sir John Abbott?

Mr. HUGHES. No, I refer to the Hon. Edward Blake.

Mr. FIELDING. I regret to say that my esteemed and revered friend, Mr. Blake, is in such feeble health that we are not permitted to invite or expect his opinion on this question. In 1891 the hon. gentleman opposite and all his friends, under the leadership of Sir John Macdonald, were endeavouring to get the very kind of reciprocity we are now offering them. There was then nothing disloyal about it; it was all right. The only difference is this, that the distinguished and able gentleman who leads this government has succeeded. It seems to be a very loyal thing to make a failure of the business and a very disloyal thing to bring it to a success. I have said that owing to the regrettable illness of my respected friend, Mr. Edward Blake—and there is no man in this House or out of it who has a higher respect for him than I—we cannot know