

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

TUESDAY, March 15, 1904.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC RAILWAY CORRESPONDENCE.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN (Halifax). Before the Orders of the Day are called, I would like to ask my right hon. friend the Prime Minister when he proposes to lay upon the Table of the House the correspondence with the Grand Trunk Railway Company, or with the promoters of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, to which he referred yesterday in his speech upon the address?

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister). I cannot say exactly the day upon which it will be brought down, but it will be either before or at the time we take up the question. I shall be able to give an answer to my hon. friend later on.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. It would be more convenient to the members of the House if we could have the correspondence a little before the day on which my right hon. friend proposes to introduce the resolution.

ADDRESS IN ANSWER TO HIS EXCEL- LENCY'S SPEECH.

House resumed adjourned debate on the proposed motion of Mr. Grant for an address to His Excellency the Governor General, in reply to his speech at the opening of the session.

Hon. JOHN HAGGART (South Lanark). Mr. Speaker, permit me in rising to take part in the debate on the address to first of all pay a compliment to the mover and seconder of the address. I listened with a great deal of pleasure to the remarks of both of these gentlemen. The hon. gentleman who moved the address (Mr. Grant), departing slightly from the usual order of things, spoke first of the Alaskan boundary award. He said, and I quite agree with him, that while the award is not the award which we expected, it is not as detrimental to the interests of Canada as was at first supposed. In reference to the award, the question naturally arose at a former session as to the treaty-making powers of the Dominion. I listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks of the right hon. gentleman who leads the government (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) upon that subject, but I must say that I did not understand him. The right hon. leader of the government stated that he wanted greater power of initiative in arranging treaties with foreign countries. We all know that the treaty-making power is vested in the king, that it is one of his prerogatives. Sometimes a treaty does not even require the assent of the Commons or of the House of Lords. It is only when a treaty deals with commerce or affects the

subject in his relations to the Crown that it is dealt with by the British parliament. The right hon. gentleman stated that what he wanted was the power of making or initiating commercial treaties with foreign countries. But surely Canada now enjoys that power to the fullest possible extent. The imperial government in their communications with this government have always excepted from the operation of any treaty entered into by them with any foreign country the people of the Dominion of Canada, and unless we give our assent we are not included in its operation, and the imperial government have over and over again given to the Canadian government the power of appointing agents for the purpose of initiating or conducting such commercial arrangements as we thought best in the interests of this country. I myself last session asked why all of the papers in reference to the Alaskan treaty were not brought down, and the right hon. the Prime Minister said that he was awaiting the assent of the imperial government, and that if the imperial government did not give their assent he was going to bring the correspondence down, right or wrong, for the consideration of parliament. We have not had it yet. What was the fault he found in reference to the Alaskan treaty? The Alaska boundary question, and all the other subjects in dispute, were relegated to the commission which was approved of by the imperial authorities, and on which we had the nomination of two of the commissioners. They would not agree upon a treaty. Lord Herschell, in his statement to the Marquis of Lansdowne, said it was impossible to make an agreement with the Americans at that time, although I presume that every effort was made to come to an arrangement. Lord Lansdowne, in his letter to the British Ambassador at Washington, stated that before the Clayton-Bulwer treaty should be abrogated it was necessary that all of these subjects should be sent to the commission. We had the power in our own hands. Lord Salisbury said the same thing in an address which he delivered in England. He asked why it was that we were called upon to settle off-hand and at once the abrogation of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, while other treaties and other matters which had been submitted to a commission for settlement had been delayed from time to time. Then the right hon. gentleman says that we had not fair play in regard to the commission. Had not the right hon. gentleman the appointment of one-half the members of the commission? And did not he appoint two members of the commission who were Canadians, while Lord Alverstone, the third British commissioner, was appointed with the consent, or rather at the request, of the government of this country? Then what fault is to be found with the imperial government when one half of the members of the commission were appointed under the authority of the right hon. gentleman who leads the government?