

well and ably administered. The development of the great West and the growing demands for information from progressive farmers everywhere have taxed the resources of the department. And that the agricultural population are alive to the great advantage offered them is seen from the fact that while during the three years ending in 1890, the number of letters received from inquiring farmers at the different experimental farms averaged less than 10,000, during the past year they numbered 102,651. I need not detail the efforts made by the department to provide experimental farms in the new provinces, to improve the seed grain and fruit culture of the country and to clear the land from pests and weeds so detrimental to progressive agriculture, and to teach the farming population that by a wise system of crop rotation they may indefinitely prolong the fertility of the soil, which must be ever the basis of agricultural success and prosperity.

And now I come to a question which may yet become one of the greatest importance to our people. I mean the question of reciprocity with the United States. We are all more or less acquainted with the operation and effect of the Elgin-Marcy treaty, which was in operation from 1854 to 1866, and all are aware of the readiness, if I may use that word, on the part of Canada for over thirty years thereafter to enter into a new reciprocal agreement until negotiations ended with the Joint High Commission of 1897-8-9. We know, Sir, that Canada in the past was ready to go to Washington: to-day, I am not far wrong in saying the United States have come to Ottawa. Now, I do not mean by this that we are to act arrogantly or vauntingly, but rather that, in the general development of intercourse with our neighbour, in trade, in travel, in movement of population and in a thousand ways, we have come to know one another better, to realize that we are two great nations on this North American continent, who, having been at peace for a period of a hundred years, can show the world the blessings of such neighbourly action.

Now, Sir, so far as I can judge, the action of the government in this matter is similar to that of any sensible business man. They welcome the representatives of the United States and say to them: We are pleased to discuss trade relations with you; if we can come to an agreement mutually satisfactory to both countries, so much the better; if not, no harm will be done. To take the position that some newspapers in Canada have taken, that the government should not negotiate at all, is in my opinion absolutely unreasonable; because until the government know the particulars of any trade proposition, no argument for or against can be advanced. The two Canadian representatives are the hon. the Minister of Finance and the hon. the Minister

of Customs; and I am sure we can feel that our interests are absolutely safe in their hands. Before leaving this subject, permit me to express the deep regret which I am sure we all feel at having learned this morning of the untimely death at Washington of the Hon. Mr. Hoyt, one of the United States commissioners on reciprocity.

The speech from the Throne also makes reference to the award of the Hague Tribunal concerning the Newfoundland fisheries. For many years the control of the North Atlantic fisheries, and conflicting rights therein, gave rise to many serious questions which at times threatened hostilities between the United States and Great Britain. We know the history of the situation. Arrangements were made, treaties were signed, working plans were agreed to, but ever and anon an open question here, an undetermined right there, gave rise to constant bickerings between the fishermen, and constant irritation between the governments. At last the question was referred to the Hague Tribunal, and we all know the result. Through the able and brilliant efforts of the Minister of Justice, Canada's representative at the Hague, these vexed questions were settled with the greatest honour and credit to our country.

Dealing now briefly with the National Transcontinental railway. I am sure that this House now freely admits the unquestioned justification for the construction of this work. We know the greatness of the west, we are learning much of the vast resources of the northern and central portions of Canada. New Brunswick and the east have a great future, and what could be so well calculated as this railway to develop the hidden wealth of the east, the west and the centre. I am informed that out of a total mileage, including yards and sidings, of 2,131 miles, 1,106 miles are now graded, and the track is laid for over 800 miles. The New Brunswick section will be finished next autumn, and it is confidently expected that the road will be in operation in 1913. The commissioners are to be congratulated on adopting the most modern methods of railway construction. The old and cheaper plan of low cost of construction led to high cost of operation and consequently to higher freight rates. Invariably, in the course of a few years, large sums of money were added to capital account which were required in reducing grades and curves, constructing new bridges, and practically in rebuilding the whole roadbed. But as I have said, the commissioners have taken an absolutely different course, and a road is being constructed of the most permanent character in every respect. Their policy will result in giving the greatest economy and efficiency in operation to a railway which means so much for the development of our country.