

statement upon which there will be no difficulty whatever in arriving at a sound and just conclusion as to the meaning of the language in which it is couched. I have endeavored to give a frank, candid and explicit statement to the House of my views as to what the treaty contains, as to the effect of its various clauses, and as to the manner in which it was understood those should be operated; and I feel that hon. gentlemen opposite are scarcely fair in endeavoring to take the line that a very few of the members, I am happy to say, have taken, of forcing the Government into making such statements in its support as would be calculated to prevent its ever becoming operative.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) The hon. gentleman has misrepresented my position in this matter. The hon. gentleman has said that I addressed the House as a lawyer, and placed a construction on the treaty which was not in the interest of Canada—a construction calculated to affect injuriously in the future, as well as in the present, Canadian interests. The House will bear me out in saying that I have put no construction on the treaty. I have said that the language of the treaty was so loosely drawn that it is capable of such and such a construction, but I did not say whether I entirely agreed with the one construction or the other.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. I am very glad to hear that.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) I pointed out most clearly to the hon. gentleman that the language used was capable of several constructions, and I asked him—and I had a right to have an answer—what was the meaning the British plenipotentiaries, at least, placed upon the treaty, and whether that meaning was accepted by the American Government or not? I am sick of hearing this argument cast against us from time to time that the truth cannot be spoken for fear it may affect Canadian interests. It is time the truth was spoken, and we should endeavor to get at the real meaning of this treaty before it finally passes the House. The hon. gentleman says that my mouth is closed because I told the House that I did not intend to move any resolution against the treaty, but that it ought to be accepted. I did say the treaty ought to be accepted, and I said that with the full knowledge, as the hon. gentleman repeats my words, that we could not alter a line of it. Why did I say so? The hon. gentleman knows well that in that very speech to which he refers, I pointed out the concessions which, in my opinion, Canada had made—concessions, which, if the opinions of the hon. gentleman and his colleagues, the hon. the Minister of Justice and the hon. the Minister of Marine and Fisheries were correct, would be fatal to the interests of Canada. But I said this, that if the hon. gentleman's statement was correct; if the relations between Canada and the United States had become strained to the extent he said they had; if we were brought face to face with a condition of facts not far removed from war; if, to use Mr. Bayard's language, we had "entered upon a career of embittered rivalry staining our long frontier with the hues of hostility;" if, to use the hon. gentleman's own language, we had cemented 65,000,000 people and their entire press in bitter hostility to the people of Canada—I said then, as I do now, that such being the case, any settlement, which was not absolutely dishonorable, should be accepted in order that we might get out of the humiliating and dangerous position to which the policy of the Government had brought us. I pointed out as strongly as I could that the harassing and injurious exactions which the Government of the day had inflicted on American vessels in carrying out our customs laws, had been of very great injury to our people, and had been chiefly instrumental in bringing about that irritable state of feeling on their part. I pointed out further that while, technically, hon. gentlemen opposite were, as I believe they were, right in their construction of the treaty, the manner in which they ad-

ministered it was fatal and suicidal, and the result of their administration was to bring us face to face with the determination on the part of 65,000,000 people that the manner in which we had acted towards them with regard to our fisheries should not be repeated, except at the risk of war. I was not prepared, for one, to risk a war with the States; I thought any settlement would be preferable to a condition of things in which we would be brought face to face with war. And I say again, rather than revert to the dangerous condition of affairs in which we were only one year ago, when we had the retaliation Bill passed by the Congress and the Senate of the United States, we should accept this treaty. That, however, does not absolve me from my duty, as a member of this House, to enquire, as minutely as I can, into the meaning of the treaty. I repeat, that common courtesy demands at the hands of the hon. gentleman, and at the hands of the hon. the Minister of Justice, where two constructions may be found as to any important clause of this treaty, that they should say what is the correct construction, instead of denouncing those who point out to their notice these two constructions. They should tell the House what their opinion is, and what the opinion of the plenipotentiaries at Washington is, as to the proper construction.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. I did so to the best of my ability.

Mr. DAVIES (P. E. I.) When I raised the question here to-day, the hon. gentleman did not do so. When I raised the question the other day, in my remarks following those of the hon. the Minister of Justice, he did not do so, and I have the right now to call for an answer. I am not open to the attack of the hon. gentleman of being in any sense unpatriotic, or of having advanced arguments which would be fatal or prejudicial to Canadian interests.

Mr. JONES (Halifax). The warmth exhibited by the hon. the Minister of Finance can only be accounted for by two suppositions: First, that the hon. gentleman finds himself in a difficult position.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. Certainly; I have explained that.

Mr. JONES (Halifax). In the next place, that he is unwilling to explain, because he desires to keep something back from the people of the United States. With regard to the first, I believe the hon. gentleman comprehends that perfectly. With respect to the second, I hope he has no such object in view, because I believe no hon. gentleman here desires, now or at any time, to keep anything back regarding the operation of the treaty, which is susceptible of a different explanation at a subsequent day. What is the position of the hon. member for Queen's (Mr. Davies)? He recognises, as every one must, the difficulty of putting a construction on these two clauses, taken together, and he asks the hon. the Minister of Finance, the hon. the Minister of Justice, and the hon. the Minister of Marine, who took part in framing this treaty, to be good enough to explain the privileges which the American fishermen would enjoy under the operation of these two clauses. And what reply has he received? He has received no reply from either of those gentlemen, but the Minister of Finance is sheltering himself under this pretext, this flimsy pretext, as I must call it, for it is nothing else, that he is afraid to give an explanation of the Act for fear it might be used in the United States. He knows that there is nothing to offer in defence of the Act, as far as Canadian interests are concerned, and therefore he is sheltering himself behind that pretext. The case which the hon. member for Queen's (Mr. Davies) has suggested may easily arise. A fishing vessel obtains a license, and desires to know how long it can obtain fishing supplies. To whom is the decision to be left? Are the collectors of customs in