

no less than three Sessions of Parliament after this announcement of the Commission, during which there was no proposal or suggestion to reverse that policy—to decide that it was unsafe or inexpedient that this question should be entrusted to a Commission or to this particular Commission. The matter so proceeded, and three years after the formation of the Commission, the Commissioners met and decided the question, and the members of the present Government, understanding the question, had not, even last Session, decided what course they would take—whether the award should be repudiated, or acted upon and confirmed. It is unfortunate that the papers in relation to this question were lost—they were not to be found in the pigeon-holes. Duplicates could not be obtained, and it was utterly impossible for the Government to come to a conclusion on the subject. Since that time, we have had no announcement, except that of the Government the other day of its intention on the subject. That announcement was that it was not the intention of the Government this Session to bring down a Bill for the confirmation of the award. Now, I think the point before us is more serious and grave than a mere territorial question, more important than the question whether the award be strictly right or wrong, than whether there be a mistake, error of judgment, or anything else in this matter. I think the question is one of much greater importance than those suggested. The Minister of Justice says that this award is of no consequence; that the arrangements made four or five years ago for the disposition of this matter by persons high in the confidence of the people of Canada are of no consequence, and that it is fit and proper that the whole question be now thrown open and discussed by a Committee selected by the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Dawson); that fourteen or fifteen members should discuss the legal and constitutional questions, questions of fact, questions of interpretation arising in this matter, and that their report should dispose of it. Now, I admit there may be cases in which an individual or a nation may be justified in breaking a bargain, or refusing to be bound by an award; but they are, and must be, cases of a wholly exceptional character. A very great responsibility

is assumed by that country, whatever its rank in the scale of nations, which declares it will not be bound by the result of a solemn convention. I esteem this in the same light as a convention between two different countries, for, as between Canada and Ontario, they are separate and distinct in this matter. The rights of the one and of the other are, it is said, in conflict. The question, what was the true boundary, was the question for resolution. I do not pretend we are absolutely bound by this award, nor does any man sitting on this side of the House. It is certain we are not so bound, and that the Act made by which this country can be formally bound by any award is an Act of Parliament, and that the power to decide questions of this kind, even by Act of Parliament, was given us not very long ago by an amendment of the British North America Act. But, while that power exists, the question of international morality subsists also, and what we have to consider is whether a case is here made out clearly sufficient to justify the procedure suggested to-day, based as that procedure is on a disregard of the award as a cogent instrument. Now, the first proposition I shall advance is that, as the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) well observed, there is a continuity in Government, and that observation applies with still greater force to a question of policy submitted to and practically disposed of by a Parliament, which Parliament had the power and free opportunity, during several Sessions, of pronouncing upon, and which never pronounced, nor was even asked to pronounce, adversely to that policy. I maintain that Parliament has assented to that policy. I say this question rests, with respect to the Government of the day, just in the same position as if the Government of the day had been responsible for the original Commission. No hon. gentleman opposite can say that the present Government, or any of its supporters, are any the less bound than was the Government of the hon. member for Lambton in reference to the issue of this Commission, or its consequences. My second proposition is that, if it be proposed not to ratify the award, but to open the question again, and throw that instrument aside, such a proposal as that should be made.