

the eyes of my hon. friend would be a merit in the eyes of every one; it has the merit of being concise and to the point. I believe my hon. friend rather rejoices in high and loud redundant sentences, and that the mere clatter of syllables has some charm for his ears, especially when the syllables fall from his own tongue. I remember a time when the speech was not so concise. In the olden days, it was rather prone to conceal the paucity of material under a verbosity of expression. My hon. friend (Mr. Foster) should have realized that the people will not be fed upon words and wind, but prefer a bill of fare reduced to a single course if there is some substance in it. There is not much legislation in the speech because we do not propose to introduce much legislation. There is only one great measure which it is proposed to introduce and that is a Bill granting autonomy to the western territories. We think the time has come when the western territories should have full partnership in confederation, when we should admit them as members of the Canadian family as full provinces. My hon. friend alluded to the fact that for two or three years there has been an appeal from the territories for full autonomy. Some two years ago we received delegations and requests from the legislature and in some instances from the people also, to have the territories at once admitted as full provinces, but we represented to the people and to the legislature that the time was scarcely opportune to have this introduced, that we could not be very far from a general election and that at that time the representation of the territories in this House was small while after a general election there would be a larger representation. They had only four members in the last parliament, they have now ten and I think the wisdom of our judgment has now been justified. It is true that we found some doubting Thomases in the territories who thought that we would not implement our promises, but there is to-day in the speech from the Throne an indication and the certainty that on this occasion as on every occasion this government fulfils its pledges and carries out its promises. My hon. friend (Mr. Foster) does not know the character of the legislation which we are about to introduce. I am sure my hon. friend does not expect that we shall tell him at this time the principal features of the Bill. We are working on it now; it is far advanced, but in respect to three or four salient features we thought it better to wait for the representations of the Northwest government and also the advice of our friends on the floor of this House.

There is another suggestion in the speech upon which my hon. friend requires some information. He has not fully apprehended what is meant by our statement with regard to the commission which we have appointed to deal with the waterways between the United States and Canada. I am very glad

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

to give my hon. friend and the House the information to which they are entitled on this point. It is within the knowledge of everybody that along a very great part of the boundary between Canada and the United States is the water system of the St. Lawrence. Now, I am sure that every one will admit that it is to the interest of Canada as well as the United States that the surface of the water should be kept at as high a level as possible. Some few years ago, when it was rumoured that the state of Illinois intended to connect the waters of Lake Michigan with the waters of the Mississippi river by means of a canal, there was an apprehension expressed, not only in this country but in the United States, that that work might have the effect of lowering the level of the waters of Lake Michigan and adjacent waters. As the event turned out, this fear was groundless, as the volume of water taken away by the canal is not sufficient to materially affect the level of the lakes. But if similar works were to be undertaken right and left, if the waters of Lake Erie and our system of waterways generally were to be tapped at different points, it is possible that the volume of water removed from the lakes would be so great that the level might be appreciably lowered. That is not all. In sections of the country where the boundary is not water, but land, there are streams and large rivers which have their sources in one country and which flow into the other. Complaint has been made by the United States that Canadians have constructed some works upon rivers which have their sources in Canada and which flow into the United States, and that these works affect the flow of the waters in their country. We also have made complaints to the United States that Americans have constructed upon some rivers, the St. John river, for instance, works which affect the flow of the waters in our country. It is, therefore, to the mutual interest and advantage of both countries to have this question properly investigated with the view of having concurrent legislation if such should be found necessary. From olden times it has been a principle of Roman law, which has been adopted by most civilized nations, that the riparian owner of any stream has the right to use the water of that stream for his own benefit, provided he does not impair the flow of the water beyond the boundary of his property. This is a principle of law which dominates in almost every country; but it is not possible to have this principle followed and carried out when the works are in one country and the boundary of the property is in another country. For these reasons we have thought it advisable to respond to the invitation of the United States to have this question investigated. We have agreed to a commission to be composed of six members, three to represent the government of the United