

and new, was hotly discussed in the county of Hochelaga, where the manufacturing industry holds a foremost place. I refer to the fiscal policy. As a matter of fact, the platform of the opposition had for its sole feature one plank, which, under a pompous name, trumpeted all over the constituency, became the by-word forced on my opponent; that sole plank was protection.

In the name of that old word, full of magic for those who are ignorant of political history previous to 1896, an attempt was made to secure the endorsement of the electorate for an out-and-out protective policy, slavishly imitating that of the great country to the south of us, where its systematic carrying out is causing the most disastrous of commercial and industrial disturbances. Vote for protection as they have it in the United States; such was the pass-word of the Conservative, or rather of the protectionist forces in the electoral division of Hochelaga. That riding, Sir, is one of those in Canada where manufacturing has attained the greatest development, a riding where that campaign of out-and-out protection had undoubtedly the greatest chance of success, assuming, as claimed by our friends on the other side of the House, that the country was dissatisfied with the present fiscal policy. The result of that campaign was the return of the Liberal candidate by a strong majority. I have no hesitation in saying that, barring a few minor details, easy of adjustment, the manufacturers and business men of the county of Hochelaga are satisfied with the fiscal policy introduced in 1897. If I needed a better proof than the verdict of February 16th, 1904, I would point to the increasing prosperity of the larger as well as the smaller establishments under the Fielding tariff: I would point out to the considerable increase in the business carried on by these mills and manufactures, the owners of which, previous to 1896, claimed that the country would be ruined should the Liberals come into power.

Must we then say, Mr. Speaker, that the present tariff should not be altered in any way? I do not think so. As all human achievements, the tariff is perfectible, liable to be improved now and then by changes necessitated by the law of competition and the fluctuations of trade. I know that just now a certain number of manufacturers, in Hochelaga and elsewhere, are calling for some changes in the tariff. I am confident that their representations, if found just and fair, will be favourably considered by the present government, and will be dealt with in that spirit of justice to which they are entitled, and which, thanks to God, has never been refused them.

Before concluding, Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my deep satisfaction at the remarkable success of the Liberal party in most of the by-elections which have taken place since the last session. The result of these elections clearly indicates the firm faith which the electors have in the government. And how, Sir, could it be otherwise? Does not the Liberal party embody to a greater degree than any other political group, the sentiments, the opinions and the aspirations of the various races inhabiting the Dominion? By its traditions, by its battles in favour of popular liberty, by its inception of all movements that have brought about the political, intellectual and social emancipation of our people, by the principles of order, toleration, harmony and progress, which are at its foundation; lastly, by the integrity, devotedness and political ability of its leaders, is not that party the natural guide of our young nationality towards the great future awaiting it?

Mr. Speaker, the men who govern this country have a lofty mission to fulfil, that of welding these heterogenous elements into a great, happy and proud nation. That task, on the 23rd of June, 1896—an ever memorable date in our political annals—the electors of Canada have gloriously conferred on the Liberal party, so worthy of that honour. Since that day has the Liberal party acted unworthily? To that question the great voice of the people, several times consulted, has answered: No. For, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government, under the guidance of that distinguished statesman, whose name is the symbol of honour and victory, has pursued and pursues the fulfilment of that mission with a measure of success that other nations envy.

May I be permitted to express to that eminent statesman my joy at seeing him once more fully restored to that state of health and vigour required to successfully carry out the work of national reformation and emancipation which he has undertaken with the co-operation of his colleagues. From one end of the Dominion to the other, where he maintains harmony, peace and prosperity, there is an ardent wish that he continue for many years to occupy the exalted position which the best interests of Canada require him to occupy.

My task is over; but before taking my seat, I wish, on the threshold of this important career which is opening before me, express an altogether personal feeling. Entrusted with the mission of taking part in the proceedings of an assembly which has charge of the future of the nation, I feel a heavy responsibility resting upon me. The task of a public man in a mixed community