

good health and able to attend to public business. I accept the statement of the Prime Minister that owing to that unfortunate accident it is impossible to proceed with the revision of the tariff this session; although one might, I suppose, come to the conclusion, and not unreasonably, that after an interval of some seven or eight months the government might have arrived at a conclusion with regard to the tariff and might have made a revision this session notwithstanding the accident to the Minister of Finance. However, as I said, I accept unreservedly the statement of the Prime Minister and I shall make no further comment with respect to that particular subject.

But, if the government have not been able to come to a conclusion on the tariff in time to enable them to revise it at this session—I may say in passing it has been the same story now for five years; that the tariff would be attended to at the next following session without the slightest possible shadow of a doubt—if the government have not been able to come to a conclusion on the tariff the Minister of Agriculture (Hon. Mr. Fisher) has been able to come to a conclusion upon a very important public question and has been able to announce a complete and absolute change from the policy of the government as laid down, not more than four years ago in a state document, and as reiterated by the Prime Minister in his recent speech in Toronto. I say, there must have been a complete change of policy on the part of the government, or else the Minister of Agriculture must be plunged in the most hopeless ignorance of what his own colleagues said at the colonial conference in 1902. We know that the Minister of Agriculture keeps pretty closely in touch with all public affairs and therefore we cannot attribute ignorance to him. Let us see what the Minister of Agriculture stated. I have one or two brief extracts from a speech which he delivered in Montreal on January 27, 1906, and I take the report of his remarks from his own organ the Montreal 'Herald,' in order that there may be no possible doubt about what he did say. He said:

You know that when we gave a preference to Great Britain we did not ask for anything in return. That is the true principle upon which a preference should be given. What is given should be given free and spontaneously. When you come to making a bargain, when you come to haggling over conditions, you create all sorts of discordant notes, you create difficulties and you create friction, you create jealousy and you create suspicion.

We shall see a little later on when we come to quote from the language of his colleagues at the Colonial conference, whether this is not a most direct and forcible criticism upon the carefully thought out memorandum which was presented by

the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance on that occasion. But that is not all. 'We farmers,' he says—I will not refer to the three tailors of Tooley street; that is an old story:

We farmers of Canada want no preference in the British market. . . . Our agricultural products require no preference in the English market. . . . I am going to say frankly as a farmer and Minister of Agriculture, that I am rather glad that England has decided not to give us a preference.

Then, further on, he said:

England has not adopted a preference for Canada, and I think she did right.

The Minister of Agriculture, the Prime Minister and other members of the government have reiterated time and again the principle that so long as this remained a political question in Great Britain no opinion should be expressed one way or the other by public men in this country as to what Great Britain should do. There has been a general election in Great Britain—is the Minister of Agriculture so absolutely ignorant of political history as to believe for one moment that that question has been ended in Great Britain by the late election? Yet before the echoes of that election have died away he ventures to stand up and assert, not only as a farmer but as Minister of Agriculture, that we do not want any preference from Great Britain, and that he is very glad that the people of Great Britain have given the verdict which they did, and that he for his part thinks that Great Britain has done right. If Great Britain has done right, it is not for the reason that the members of the administration of which he is a member did not ask Great Britain to take the opposite course. Let me read a resolution unanimously adopted by his colleagues who represented this government at the Colonial conference, and let us see how far it accords with the statement made by the Minister of Agriculture in his speech at Montreal. I will not allude to the circumstance that Col. Howard Vincent, on a certain festive occasion in this city when speaking of the campaign for preferential trade within the empire on which he had entered, was bidden God-speed by the Minister of Agriculture. If it were not for the well known temperance principles which actuate that hon. gentleman on all occasions, I would be inclined to suppose that for once he had departed from his usual custom, and that he should not be held responsible for what he said on that occasion. But let us see how far the colleagues of the hon. gentleman are in accord with the principles which he has laid down on this great question in his recent speech at Montreal. Here are the words of his colleagues embodied in a resolution passed unanimously at the Colonial conference of 1902: