

to talk protection, as Sir Charles Tupper undertook to talk it at that moment. Although the people of Canada have been saddled with enormous duties the result has been that the production of pig iron instead of increasing has decreased all along, and the result has been that, though we have not reaped any benefit such as Sir Charles Tupper promised, yet at the same time all the manufacturers who use iron, and they are legion in this country, have been hampered, and seriously hampered, by these duties, and if the Minister of Finance were to bring down to the House the petitions and memorials which I understand the Government have received against the duties on pig iron, they would open the eyes of hon. members of this House, for I have it on good authority that for a long time petitions have been sent in begging the Minister of Finance to remove the duties that have done no good to anybody, but have seriously hampered the iron trade. Well, Sir, what is at present the condition of the country? This question can be looked upon from two different stand-points—from the stand-point of the Government, and from the stand-point of the people. The Government tell us that the country is prospering, but what do the people say? What is their opinion and what is their action? The people, Sir, one portion of them fly from that prosperity, and those who remain in the country are begging and petitioning the Government to free them from the National Policy. What is the conclusion to be derived from this state of things? The conclusion is: that taxation by whatever name you call it, taxation however you may disguise it, taxation is an evil which never can produce prosperity. It is an evil, and no good can come from evil. Taxation by whatever name you call it, whether disguised or undisguised, is always an abridgment of the rights of the citizen. It is a toll levied upon his earnings and upon his property. I know very well that taxation by Customs can be so arranged as to divert the proceeds from the public treasury and put it into the pockets of a few favoured individuals, and can therefore have a semblance of prosperity; but, Sir, that prosperity for the few, is always at the expense of the many. Freedom is the normal condition of trade, and freedom is the goal to which we are aspiring. That is the policy of this side of the House. I know very well, Sir, that we cannot for many years have freedom of trade, such as they have in England. I know that for many years we must raise our revenue by Customs duties, but I tell the Finance Minister, that the difference between him and us, is this: That whereas he forms his tariff for protection, and with revenue as merely an incident; we will frame our tariff, not for protection, but for revenue, and we will impede and interfere with freedom of trade only in so far as is absolutely necessary for the purposes of a revenue, and for nothing else. Sir, I stated on another occasion, and

in another place, that during the last election in the United States, the people of that country had most emphatically decided for the principle of free trade. My hon. friend the Finance Minister, in opening this debate, challenged this statement, and not only challenged the statement, but actually denied it. He is strong at denying, I admit, but if he denies that the American people, at the last presidential election, practically decided in favour of freedom of trade, I am prepared to hear that the hon. gentleman will deny everything, that he will deny that there are twelve months in the year, that he will deny that the sun rises in the east and moves towards the west, or that he will deny that there is such a thing as an exodus. But, as the hon. gentleman is of a skeptical nature, I will endeavour to give him proof which ought to be sufficient in itself. I will quote to him from the platform adopted by the Democratic party at its last convention in Chicago. Here is how it reads:

We denounce Republican protection as a fraud, a robbery of the great majority of the American people for the benefit of the few. We declare it to be a fundamental principle of the Democratic party that the Federal Government has no constitutional power to impose and collect tariff duties except for the purpose of revenue only, and demand that the collection of such duties shall be limited to the necessities of the Government and honestly and economically administered.

Sir, denouncing protection has always seemed to me as promoting free trade. Does the hon. gentleman believe the reverse, or does he think differently? Well, if he does, let us go a step further. The hon. gentleman is aware that during the last election the question which was fought upon every hustings in the United States, the question which was discussed in every newspaper, was the merit of protection, on the one side, and the merit of free trade on the other. Is this not sufficient to convince my hon. friend?

Mr. FOSTER. No.

Mr. LAURIER. Then, this is not sufficient, let us go a little further. The hon. gentleman is perhaps aware—I am sure he heard it, but if he heard it perhaps he will choose to forget—the hon. gentleman is perhaps aware that during last session of Congress the Democratic party in the House of Representatives organized a scheme whereby they circulated as their own literature, the whole of Henry George's book, "Protection or Free Trade," and there never was a stronger plea written in favour of free trade than that book contains. When the Democratic party in the House of Representatives went so far as to organize a scheme to circulate a whole book written in favour of free trade, will the hon. gentleman, in view of all that evidence, still believe that the issue which was fought at the polls during the last election was not an issue between freedom of trade and protection? If the hon. gentleman still denies that, I am prepared to believe, as I said a moment ago, that he will deny anything whatever.