

so by saying that I am perfectly satisfied that the present government will so adjust the tariff that it will meet with the requirements of every class in this country. It is somewhat difficult, and has been difficult ever since 1896, to ascertain just what position our hon. friends opposite take upon the tariff question. It is not very easy to locate just where they stand on the subject. We all know that when the present Minister of Finance brought down his tariff resolutions in 1897, the leader of the opposition at that time declared that the tariff then brought down was destined to bring ruin to every industry in this country. Let me trouble the House while I read the declaration which was made on that occasion by the then leader of the opposition. He said :

The result is that this tariff goes into operation, and the hon. gentleman (Mr. Fielding) knows that the industries of this country are already paralyzed in consequence. While hon. members opposite gloat over the destruction of Canadian industries, I was reading the wail, the sorrowful wail of those industries in the Montreal 'Gazette,' where one manufacturer after another declared that those industries were ruined, that their mills must close, and that they saw staring them in the face a return of the deplorable state of things that existed when the hon. gentleman who last addressed the House, was in charge of the fiscal policy of the country. I say that a deeper wrong was never inflicted upon Canada.

I need not remind the House, and it is not necessary to remind the country, upon this occasion, how far from fulfilment that prediction of the then leader of the opposition fell. How did the industries of Canada suffer? They did not suffer. They prospered as they never prospered before, but, when it was found that the industries had not suffered as the result of the tariff which my hon. friend the Minister of Finance brought down in 1897, there was then, in the House of Commons, as there was throughout the country, a claim set up by the Conservative party that the Liberal party had taken up the tariff of the government which had preceded them and that if prosperity had prevailed in this country since 1896 it was due entirely to the fact that the government had taken up the policy and followed in the footsteps of their predecessors. I have a distinct recollection of the hon. member for West Toronto (Mr. Clarke) addressing this House the other evening and he went on to point out that if we did have any degree of prosperity since 1896, it was owing in no small degree to the fact that the government of the day were simply travelling in the footsteps of the government which preceded them and which went out in 1896. He went on to say that if there was any difference between the policy of the present government and the policy of that which preceded them, it was slight indeed, and that the difference simply amounted to 2 per cent. He went further and said that if you take the preference into consideration the difference be-

tween the two policies is less still. On the other hand, we had the declaration from some hon. members on the other side of the House that the tariff of the present government is not satisfactory. They want a declaration of policy as to the tariff, and as I said when I commenced my observations in respect to this tariff matter, so far as I am concerned, I have some considerable difficulty in determining just exactly where our friends opposite and their followers throughout the country are on this question of the tariff.

There is one matter to which I propose addressing myself for a little while. It has become a fashionable thing during the past few years and even this session in the House of Commons to assail the expenditure of money on the Intercolonial Railway. I propose for a few minutes to point out to this House and to the country that the expenditure of money on the Intercolonial Railway since 1896 has been in every respect justifiable. Need I remind the House that the condition of the Intercolonial Railway, when this government came into power in 1896, was entirely unsatisfactory to that portion of country through which the Intercolonial Railway runs? I need not remind the hon. member for Pictou (Mr. Bell) that he was dissatisfied with the condition of the Intercolonial Railway in 1896. I am sure that he will be the first to admit that so far as the portion of the province from which he comes is concerned, the Intercolonial Railway was not satisfactory to the people. I need not remind the hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. Borden, Halifax) that to the constituency which he represents the Intercolonial Railway and its condition was unsatisfactory in 1896. From every constituency through which the Intercolonial Railway runs in the province of Nova Scotia there came the cry that it was not in the condition that a great railway ought to be in. The present Minister of Railways and Canals (Hon. Mr. Blair) went to some trouble to ascertain the exact condition of the Intercolonial Railway and he went to some trouble to put the road in the state that we find it in to-day. We find the Intercolonial Railway to-day in a condition second to no road in Canada. Was the condition of the Intercolonial Railway in 1896 satisfactory to any person who was doing business with it? Was the rolling stock satisfactory to the people of the country? Was the freight service on the road satisfactory to the people? Was the passenger service satisfactory? I say most unhesitatingly, and, I think the opinion is universal, throughout the constituencies of this country through which the Intercolonial Railway passes, that not one of these services was satisfactory in 1896. I am glad to know that the condition which obtains to-day on the Intercolonial Railway is entirely different from that which existed in 1896. Have we the poor condition to-

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