

1874 to 1878, which averaged in customs duties \$13,592,104, less than the yearly average of the last five years by \$9,216,040. The total customs duty collected during the five years of the Liberal Administration was \$67,960,523, against \$114,040,723 during the last five years, or an increase of \$46,080,200. But taking customs and excise together, to tell the whole story of the enormous increase in the burdens of taxation on the people of the country, and we find the yearly average during the Liberal Administration to have been \$18,997,668, while the yearly average from 1888 to 1892 was \$29,827,662, an increase in these five years over those of the Mackenzie Administration of over \$54,000,000, representing a total excess of taxation in the thirteen years of the protective tariff of \$106,189,967; and yet we are informed that this tariff does not represent any increase of burden on the people of the country. I am very gratified, and I presume the people of the country are very gratified, at the reduction of taxation on sugar. Let us see the effect of that reduction, as showing how the removal of an enormous burden affects the comfort and the happiness and the welfare of the people. The quantity of sugar imported into the country in 1891 was 197,163,919 pounds, on which was paid a duty of \$3,138,894. The duty was practically removed, and there was then imported 345,418,485 lbs. of sugar. If we had time to go over the whole period of the sugar duties, we should obtain some conception of the amount of which the people have been deprived by the enormous taxation on that article. It conduced to their comfort and happiness, and the cheapness and economy of living, to have this important article made free. How much more would it have contributed to their happiness and welfare if during the whole thirteen years of this high tariff policy the duty had been wholly removed or greatly reduced. The enormously increased consumption is due to the reduced price to consumers, caused partly by the reduction of the duty and partly by improvements in the methods of manufacture and development of the industry. This must have afforded the people a large amount of happiness and comfort growing out of these improved conditions. And in many particulars, even if the duties had been decreased, perhaps the revenue of the country might not have been so greatly affected. To give one illustration: We find that between 1874 and 1878 we introduced 536,886,314 pounds of sugar, which was valued at \$26,427,930. During the years from 1887 to 1891 the amount consumed very largely increased, but the value was about the same, showing that the cost of sugar had largely decreased, owing to the circumstances to which I have referred. 997,256,703 pounds of sugar, valued at \$26,045,635 were imported, but the duty upon practically the same value of sugar was, in the first period, \$11,115,507; and, in the second pe-

Mr. FLINT.

riod, \$16,267,027, showing an increase of duty upon the same value of sugar of over \$5,000,000 levied upon the consuming sections of the country. And yet we are taught, by inference at any rate, that somewhat the same results would not accrue to these classes, if the burdens on other articles of ordinary use and consumption were removed. If the burdens were reduced, the consumption would be greater, and the revenue, while not so much increased, would not bear so heavily on the people; and if the burdens were completely taken away, the people would consume larger quantities, because they could buy more cheaply. The whole question, however, resolves itself substantially into this: the amendment of the hon. member for South Oxford (Sir Richard Cartwright) as contrasted with the policy of the Administration. The policy of the Government is substantially to continue the National Policy—to retain the features of our present tariff indefinitely—because no one supposes that our Finance Minister will not be controlled by the parties who are supporting him now, and whose support depends on his retention of a high tariff. The policy of the hon. member for South Oxford (Sir Richard Cartwright) is supported not only by members on this side, but by some hon. gentlemen on the opposite side as well. We take the ground that the present tariff bears heavily and unjustly on the consuming classes, and ought to be at once thoroughly reformed in the direction of freer trade and that the amount of taxes collected be limited to the sum required to meet the necessities of the Government efficiently and economically administered. I need not dwell upon the false line of argument so frequently taken by hon. gentlemen opposite, in charging that we are advocates of free trade for the Dominion. A large portion of the Liberal party believe in free trade, as a reasonable and natural condition of things, if we could possibly have it; but the term “free trade,” as used in this discussion, ought always to be considered to mean simply that system of trade which does not tax any commodities for the benefit of any privileged classes or individuals, but taxes them solely for the benefit of the whole community, as represented by the public treasury. Free trade or the introduction of all commodities absolutely free from any tax would be impossible in any country; and to call attention to the difficulties of revenue, as if that has anything to do with the position taken by hon. gentlemen on this side, is entirely aside from any rational or practical discussion of financial matters. It is in the direction of freer trade that we are moving, and the whole history of the Liberal party, during its term of office, and when in opposition, shows that they have been always in favour of the freest possible trade that could be obtained by our people, having regard to the revenue requirements of the country. There never was a time when the Liberal