

to divert traffic from Portland to St. John and Halifax. Mr. Merrill also says that Boston is after some of Portland's traffic. Mr. Merrill states that the Maine Central—this is a very important thing if true; I am not able to guarantee the truth of it, but I want to know, and I want to know as early as possible, and as nearly as possible, whether the statement by Mr. Merrill, which I am going to read, is true or is not true—his statement is that the Maine Central, the Boston and Maine, and the Grand Trunk Railroads have come together and given a preferential rate over their lines for freight going to the state pier at Portland, Maine. Already, he declares, this has meant a saving to the people of Maine of \$75,000. He says further that the railroads have promised that as business develops they will make a further differential. This pier cost the state of Maine \$1,150,000, and the cities of Portland and South Portland gave the site, which is valued at \$350,000. I am not in a position to say that the statement in question is true, but hon. members will understand that I am vitally interested, as is every other resident in the port of St. John or in the port of Halifax, in knowing whether there is any, or the slightest, foundation for such a statement as has been made by Mr. Merrill. Last winter I ventured the suggestion that the differentials should be imposed the other way, and that there should be practically a prohibitive differential imposed by this country upon the haulage of goods from Montreal to Portland, Maine. In other words, just say to the people who want their goods carried out by a foreign port: "We will take them if you route them that way, we have got to do it for you, but it is going to cost you more, and definitely more, than it will to take them through the port of Halifax, or the port of St. John, over our own railways, all the way in our own territory." That is what I say would be one of the fair things to do in order to help to build up the ports of the Maritime provinces.

Another suggestion I ventured to make was that we should limit the British preference—not in amount, let us have the best arrangement with the Mother Country we possibly can, but limit the customs preference we give to the Mother Country to importations in British—and in that I naturally include Canadian—bottoms, sailing directly from the United Kingdom ports to Vancouver, Quebec, Montreal, Halifax, Sydney, St. John, or any other port in our own territory. This puts no burden on any one. It does not lessen the quantity of goods that will come into Canada or it does not enhance their price, but it does say to the steamship owners: "There will be more

[Mr. Baxter.]

cargo for you. If you are taking a cargo of grain and mixed supplies out of St. John you will get more package freight put into your holds when you come back because the importer will get the benefit of the lowest scale of duty by doing that, and we are not going to let him send it in by New York, Boston, or Portland and let these ports derive the same advantage as the ports of this country." That is what I suggested last year. I see that it is the very principle that the government, and I give them credit for it, introduced into the commercial treaty with France. I think they have taken a long step in advance in doing that. I think they are entitled to credit for it. I think that whatever we may condemn them for, whatever fault we may find with them in other matters, we will say they are right in that. But let them make it general, and thus help to build up all our ports and use our railways to the very fullest extent of their capacity.

A little more reference to the Speech or the omissions from the Speech and I shall have done. We are being told—not in the Speech itself, you would not expect to find it there—that we have a wonderful government. I have heard some hon. members opposite tell us that, and I am sure they were convinced of the truth of the assertion. There were not so many members in the House then on the government side as there are to-day; but we are all aware that a little fire broke out in a place not very many hundreds of miles from the city of Ottawa, and some of the fire department—I think even a gentleman of very eminent judicial talents, and perhaps gentlemen associated with the custom house and the naval service—went down to squirt water on that political fire in Montreal; and they did not put it out. We have a wonderful government here, but some of the gentlemen who engage in this laudation may perhaps see, by the flickering of the light of that fire some traces of the handwriting on the wall.

I am very glad of the results that we witnessed in the provincial field the other day, because they demonstrate that the assertions that have been made are not well founded and that the old Conservative party of Canada is still potent, active, and influential in all parts of Canada in the same sense that it always has been. It is broad enough, strong enough, and representative enough for all. The old party is absolutely alive in the province of Quebec and I am proud of it. I am glad to see that the verdict given the other day, though it did not turn a government out of power, yet demonstrated to the