

"We do not by our resolution OFFER ANYTHING TO GREAT BRITAIN ALONE. WE MAKE OUR OFFER TO EVERY NATION THAT IS WILLING TO ACCEPT IT. We make it to every nation which is willing to establish fair and reasonable trade relations with Canada."

What was there of a British preference about that?

THE CONSERVATIVE POLICY CLEARLY DEFINED

The Conservative party at that time realized that instead of tending towards a closer commercial alliance with Great Britain the measure introduced by the Liberals actually sought to stab British trade in the back, and Sir George Foster, the then financial critic of the Opposition led by Sir Charles Tupper, attacked it in these words:

"It may be that the Dominion of Canada, if it could make preferential terms with Great Britain AND WITH GREAT BRITAIN ALONE, would be willing to do it to an extent which might press hard upon the industries of Canada itself. But whilst from the warm blood of loyalty that courses in her veins, she would make that sacrifice for Britain, IT IS ANOTHER THING WHEN WE ARE ASKED TO PLACE OUR INDUSTRIES AT THE COMPETITION AND MERCY OF A NUMBER OF NATIONS."

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's suggestions in 1896 for a British Zollverein, made at the third Congress of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, was recalled by Sir Charles Tupper, who urged that it offered an opening for obtaining preferential trade with Britain; and the veteran statesman bitterly complained that by the Laurier-Fielding proposal this opportunity was thrown away. Here are his closing words:

"We find that question of preferential treatment, with all its growing prospects and opportunities for drawing Canada and the Mother Country more closely together thrown away, and this miserable system of differential treatment undertaken in the teeth of treaties and obligations by which the Mother Country is bound."

The Favoured Nations Treaty forced the Liberals to abandon their reciprocal proposals, and the following year they were compelled to narrow them down to Great Britain.

The foregoing is the plain unvarnished history of the birth of the British preference. Will anyone say, in the light of these facts, that Laurier is its legitimate father?