

the exception of the dinner hour, we were treated to a succession of kaleidoscopic variations—dissolving views, as is suggested by an hon. friend behind me—which certainly had the effect of keeping us awake; because at no one particular point in the address was any person able to conclude what would be the next step in the programme. The arguments certainly did not lack in diversity. True to themselves and to their party history, the Government of my hon. friend the Prime Minister carried into their tariff to the very end that same delightful love of change and variety, that same indefiniteness and uncertainty, which in the last six years, to go no further back, has been one of the chief characteristics of the party then in Opposition, and now occupying the Treasury benches; and to-day I doubt if there is a single man sitting on those benches who up to this hour has any definite idea of what is either the scope of that tariff or what its effect will be upon the industries of this country. I have to confess candidly that I have not been able to make up my mind yet on these particulars, either of them. I know I am at a disadvantage in attempting to criticise the tariff presentation of yesterday; for up to the present time I am without a sight of one single resolution or item which was brought down yesterday by the Finance Minister. Neither in manuscript nor in print have I been able to see it where I could authoritatively place my fingers upon it and know that I would be certain in directing criticism upon any one item. Contrary to all precedent in this House, and I believe in any other constitutionally governed British assembly, the items were not even all read. They were slurred over, some parts given, and some not given, some read in part and some allowed to go without reading, until, as I say, it is practically utterly impossible for any one at this present time to say what is the tariff, what are the different items and rates, and what are the tendency and scope of the changes that have been made. Under these circumstances I must certainly direct my criticism to the general lines—I will not call them principles—which underlie this tariff revision.

But before I go to that, I have a word or two to say with reference to the first part of the speech yesterday, in relation to the finances of the country. I fear that there will be a little divergence of opinion between the Minister of Finance and myself with reference to the outcome of the current year and of the succeeding year. I am happy to know that we agree pretty closely upon the outcome of 1895-96. There is a reason for that. The figures were all down and in hand and printed, and speculation was practically outside of the question. With reference to the year 1895-96, there is nothing at all that I can find fault with, if I were disposed to do it, in the presenta-

tion given by the hon. Minister of Finance. Barring a little item with reference to the \$2,394,000 of the Quebec subsidies, and which, after a question from myself, the hon. gentleman and myself agreed in, across the floor of the House, there is nothing I would have the least disposition to find fault with, and I am happy to know that the Liberal-Conservative Government, which was in power in this country from 1878, went out of power with a record on its financial side so well-grounded and favourable as that which has been given to us by the Finance Minister of the day himself with reference to 1895-96. As if he intended to knock himself over in order to have the pleasure of picking himself up, he gave his own answer to all that rather long and tedious discussion about the utter failure of the National Policy and the bitter disappointment that it had been to the country, by showing, under the testimony and seal of the public documents, that in its eighteenth year of work, after a period of great depression extending from 1890 to 1895, the state of the revenue, the state of the finances, the state of the country were, in every respect, what a conservative and honourable Finance Minister could characterize as being firm and as showing both buoyancy and expansion, so far as the revenue and the progress of the country are concerned. What does that show, according to the statements of the hon. Finance Minister himself? First, that an expenditure was made in that year of \$50,000 less than I had estimated for in the Budget of the preceding year, \$900,000 less than the Estimates which were brought down and passed and placed into my hands to expend, and \$1,200,000 less than was expended by that same Government in the year preceding, giving for ever a quietus to the argument, which has been over and over again advanced by hon. gentlemen opposite, that the Liberal-Conservative party had played with the finances of the country recklessly when political contests were coming and political support had to be called upon. In that last year, 1895-96, the revenue came to within \$330,000 of what I had estimated it, and would have reached my estimate if it had not been for the unfortunate apple of discord which hon. gentlemen opposite, by the stand they took in the elections which terminated in June, 1896, threw into the business arena, causing uncertainty, causing men to be cautious in their business operations, and which diminished the revenue by the fear of an eventuality which might occur. Sir, it showed more than that. It showed a deficit which, in the lean and depressing years, at first amounted to \$1,200,000 and then to \$4,100,000, a deficit, be it remembered, which was only possible by the fact that large reductions were made upon raw sugar, and that consequently the deficit to the public was represented by a corresponding gain to the pockets of the people through the non-imposition of the heavy