

meaning and would have governed themselves accordingly. It said :

For this reason and in order to prevent inconveniences, it will be desirable if such preferential duties are included in a general tariff bill, that a proviso should be added that they are not to come into operation until Her Majesty's pleasure had been signified.

Here was the instruction that was addressed to the Governor General of Canada and the governor of every colony in the British Empire. It was a circular despatch in which they had the plainest orders set before them that they were not to give Her Majesty's assent to any bill which contained preferences of any kind. In the face of that, the government went on for weeks, ignoring all that was said to them and arguing that their proposal did not come under the terms of Lord Ripon's despatch at all. They set up two contentions: first, that these treaties—the German and Belgian—did not apply to us, because Canada had not been consulted and Canada had not ratified those treaties as a separate colony of the empire. The second ground was that the proposition did not mean a preference at all; it was simply a reciprocal provision, and for both these reasons or either of them, the German and Belgian treaties did not apply. The Hon. Sir Louis Davies, the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, who became the mouth-piece of the government in regard to this matter, said this :

When this resolution was tabled the hon. gentleman (referring to Sir Charles Tupper) declared it an illegal and unconstitutional resolution. Can he lay his finger upon a single paragraph published in any newspaper of weight in the world endorsing that extravagant statement of his? Can he produce the opinion of a prominent lawyer or even of a fledgeling lawyer endorsing the absurd and ridiculous statement made by him that the resolution was unconstitutional and illegal?

This was the declaration of the mouth-piece of the government. Shortly afterwards however they actually brought down an amendment which partly removed the difficulty and which showed they had no confidence in their own contention. It extended the provisions of the resolution to all nations with which Great Britain had treaties in regard to trade. With that provision attached, the royal assent would be given to it, but they still contended that the German and Belgian treaties did not apply to Canada and even if they did apply in general they did not apply to this provision because it was a reciprocal provision

and was not in the nature of a preference to any country in particular they all would have to earn this advantage by making a tariff as low as ours. This was the argument and with that argument the premier left for England. What do we find? We find that the law lords decided against the government. They say those treaties with Belgium and Germany were denounced on account of this resolution that our Parliament had passed. It is significant however that the treaties were denounced before the English law lords heard the argument of the Canadian representatives. I do not pretend to say that that resolution was altogether without weight in the consideration of the entire question. It may be that it was detrimental in some respects. I will prove that it was regarded as a detriment to the abrogation of the treaties by some men and assurances had to be given that there was no danger before they were denounced. By some the Canadian resolution may have been regarded as an auxiliary, but we have it from Mr. Chamberlain himself, in the report of the conference and from a subsequent speech made by him, that when he received the resolution of the conference—the unanimous resolution of the conference—asking for the denunciation of the treaties which hampered the rights of the colonies to give preference to Great Britain, he laid the matter seriously before the government and the government decided to denounce these treaties. But, hon. gentlemen, I want to point out to you that there were in the minds of very eminent men in England at that time, and not much wonder, serious doubts as to whether the denunciation of those treaties would not lead, in Canada particularly, rather in the way of the disintegration of the empire than to consolidation. On the day previous to the prorogation of the British Parliament, on the 5th of August last, Mr. Courtney, one of the members from the county of Cornwall, brought the matter up before the House of Commons and I will just give a short extract from what he said on that occasion. He said :

A few years ago there was a strong party movement in Canada in favour of promoting almost complete fiscal freedom between the United States and Canada. But that could not be accomplished without differential duties as between goods imported by the United States and European countries, if not between this country and Canada. This step towards the fiscal freedom of the colonies was a step rather towards dis-