

the sooner we do away with it the better. Perhaps, however, that is beside the question, because the resolution before us does not propose free trade. As the member for Brome has said, our present tariff system is the most expensive way of collecting a revenue. Last year we collected, I believe, about \$160,000,000 under the customs tariff. I am satisfied that we paid on account of that tariff at least \$500,000,000; that leaves \$340,000,000 that does not go into the treasury. I agree that there are many other less expensive ways of raising revenue, and if the question before us were simply whether or not we were in favour of the principle laid down in this amendment, I should be quite willing to vote for it. There is no excuse for our present tariff, and it is up to this Government to see that it is materially reduced. Former Conservative and Liberal Governments had an excuse for not reducing the tariff, which does not exist now. When they were in power the American customs tariff was higher than ours and its existence was the main excuse for protection in Canada. At present, however, we pay practically double the average tariff rate paid by the people of the United States; therefore it is the duty of the present Government to see that there is a material reduction in the customs tariff. I have some hope, notwithstanding what the member for Prince, P.E.I., (Mr. Read) says, that the Acting Prime Minister and the Government will give that some consideration. I do not see how they can avoid giving it consideration. The fact that agricultural implements, cement, boots and shoes, harness and saddlery, and other things mentioned by the member for Brome—I mention only some of the more important ones—are on the free list in the United States is a good reason why a material reduction in the duty on those articles should be made here. The Canadian manufacturers have the American market open to them; they have as good a chance in that market as American manufacturers have, and I see no good reason why Canadian manufacturers should have preference over American manufacturers while American farmers have a preference over Canadian farmers. I am confident that the Government will take this into consideration when they come to deal with the matter of the customs tariff in the Budget.

While saying this, I agree with most of what has been said by the member for Red Deer (Mr. Michael Clark) and the Minister of Agriculture (Hon. T. A. Crerar). I

[Mr. Thomson.]

think they have placed the position of the Western members on this side fairly well before the House. The member for Red Deer says that in bringing forward this resolution the Opposition had no desire to defeat the Government; in other words, that it was not their desire to stand by the natural consequence of their action if this resolution should carry. Is the leader of the Opposition prepared to form a Government to carry on the business of the country if this resolution is adopted?

Mr. McMASTER: Why not?

Mr. LEVI THOMSON: I do not think he will say that he is; I think it is thoroughly understood that there is no desire of that kind. In what he said the other night, the member for Prince, P.E.I., was voicing his own sentiments and the sentiments generally of the members opposite.

Mr. McKENZIE: If the hon. gentleman did me the honour of listening to my remarks this afternoon, he must have heard me say that the Liberal party was prepared to assume any responsibility which this country chose to cast upon it.

Mr. LEVI THOMSON: He did not say that he thought this country or the House were prepared at this time to cast that responsibility on the Opposition. What would the consequences of carrying this resolution be? If all the members from the Prairie Provinces, who are deeply interested in the carrying out of some such policy as that suggested by the resolution—very much more deeply interested in it than most of these hon. gentlemen are—should vote for the resolution, the Government would be obliged to resign. A great many of those western members would not be prepared to support a Government formed by the present Opposition. And even if every man of us was prepared to support it, we would not have a working majority in the House, and a general election would have to follow. Who wants a general election? Does the leader of the Opposition want a general election now? I have too much respect for him to suppose that he does. I certainly do not want one.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for West Middlesex (Mr. Ross) laughs at that. It is implied, I suppose, that I do not want to go back to my constituency for election. I do not care a straw how soon I go back for election; I do not care a straw whether I ever go back for election or not. I am not hankering for it; I do not know whether I shall run again or not. But if the Oppo-