

Sir Wilfrid knew when he made the above declaration that there could never be a preference for Great Britain under Free Trade. He merely sought to cover his hostility to closer connection in trade as in everything else by resort to a characteristic quib. And coming down to a later date, does any one to-day suppose that the Liberal party was thinking of a preference with Great Britain when it unblushingly advocated "Commercial Union" and "Unrestricted Reciprocity" with the United States? Was there any thought of a British preference in the Free Trade platform of 1893 ?

Laurier followed Sir Charles Tupper.

In 1896, Sir Wilfrid Laurier admitted that Sir Charles Tupper was the father of the British preference idea. In an address in Toronto he used these words:

"I agree with him (Sir Charles Tupper) in regard to preferential trade. . . . The advantages are obvious, so obvious that the moment I saw the idea I jumped at it, and immediately declared myself in favour of it."

LIBERAL TARIFF NOT PREFERENTIAL.

This brings us to 1897. To-day the Liberal party would have this country believe that in that year they instituted what is now known as the British preference. They instituted nothing of the kind. They introduced a reciprocal tariff act, section 17 of which provided as follows:

"When the customs tariff OF ANY COUNTRY ADMITS THE PRODUCTS OF CANADA ON TERMS, WHICH, ON THE WHOLE, ARE AS FAVORABLE TO CANADA AS THE TERMS OF THE RECIPROCAL TARIFF REFERRED TO ARE TO THE COUNTRIES TO WHICH IT MAY APPLY, articles which are the growth, produce or manufacture of such country, when imported direct therefrom, may then be entered for duty, or taken out of warehouse for consumption in Canada, AT THE REDUCED RATES OF DUTY SET FORTH IN SCHEDULE D TO THIS ACT."

Here is incontrovertible evidence that the Liberal party in 1897 decided to apply the preference, not merely to Great Britain—they parted company with Sir Charles Tupper and the Conservative party there—but to other countries who were the bitter commercial rivals of the Motherland and the Empire. Here are the words of the Hon. Mr. Fielding at that time; they leave not the slightest doubt as to what the Laurier Government had in mind: