

OTTAWA LETTER.

The Debate on Hon. Mr. Fielding's Budget Speech.

The Policy of the Conservative Party

As Set Forth by the Opposition Leader in His Resolution and His Arguments—New Members Doing Good Work.

OTTAWA, March 18.—Mr. A. C. Bell, Pictou's clever representative, replying to Sir Richard Cartwright, Friday afternoon, exposed many of the weaknesses of the liberal preferential tariff. He spoke for over two hours, during which he received an exceptionally good hearing from all parts of the house. His effort was one of the best of the session, and Mr. Bell is to be highly congratulated. He spoke, as a man might be expected to speak who had carefully looked into the questions at issue and had reviewed them from both sides. His arguments against the preferential tariff were very strong and before his remarks had been made it was clear that Canada had not been benefited to any great extent by the sentimental concessions given to England by Mr. Fielding and his colleagues. Mr. Bell was moved to make his references to preferential trade, by a challenge from the government members. Mr. Fielding and Sir Richard Cartwright defended the members of the opposition to announce something definite in regard to their opinions as to what trade policy should be adopted in reference to the mother country. It proved to be unnecessary, as the government members had been ever ready with their policy on national policy lines. Mr. Bell gave the government members some hints which might be put to good use in reforming the present tariff.

Mr. Bell found the minister of finance in a combative mood, particularly in regard to preferential tariff. He had asked that the opposition should challenge his course in that matter, and Mr. Bell placed the challenge before the finance minister, so that Mr. Fielding brought to his feet in a way that he seldom has been, since he took a seat on the government benches. Mr. Bell says that Mr. Fielding reminds him of Sinbad the Sailor, when that gentleman found himself in such a miserable plight after he had foolishly allowed the old man of the sea to get upon his shoulder. Sinbad found himself choked and incumbered by the manner in which the old man of the sea gripped him about the neck, and when he suggested that the old man get off his shoulders, the latter, feeling very comfortable where he was, and resigned to his situation, declined to quit. Mr. Bell believes that this was just about the position of the minister of finance, who blundered into preferential tariff and may blunder out of it. He thinks that the preferential tariff has had a very bad effect, that of driving the government into a corner, where it will be compelled to make an honest and public declaration of its policy, and to say whether it is a government of protection or hybrid free trade. Mr. Bell had hoped that the minister of finance would have dealt with his great experience, have given the house some information in regard to the preferential policy, but Sir Richard had not uttered a single syllable to justify it, beyond a bare assertion that the sentiment aroused in England had repelled any sacrifice which she has made.

Mr. Bell considered that the absence of facts concerning the benefits of preferential trade was due to the government's utter inability to produce them. While trade with Great Britain has increased in the past eight years, the growth of that commercial intercourse has not been as great in proportion as that with other countries. Mr. Bell takes it that this condition of affairs affords ample proof that the increased business between Canada and the motherland cannot be wholly attributed to preferential trade; and it might be well to add in that connection, that in making this assertion, he was following on a line of argument used by Mr. Clancy on the occasion of his excellent reply to the minister of finance. Taking last year's business, it will be found that England increased her Canadian trade (calculated on percentage) less than eight other countries with whom Canada was trading. The seven other nations all competed against England, and she was beaten by the almost preference granted by the present government. The result shows that in order to do an increased business with Canada, it is not necessary to have the advantage of preferential trade, and Great Britain was not able to hold her own with some competitors, notably, the United States. While the mother land increased her trade with Canada, \$11,809,586 in four years the United States made gains of \$51,000,000 in the same period, and in 1900 the increase, as compared with 1899, was \$11,000,000. This shows that the preferential trade, so far as it is concerned, is largely a matter of sentiment. It can only have an outcome and when pressure is brought to bear on the government by hard times, they will be brought to their knees. Mr. Bell hopes to see in the near future the liberal party living such a life in the eyes of the world, as will prove them to be either a free trade party or a revenue tariff party.

The preferential tariff policy has another disadvantage. It is only given to a very limited class of people of Great Britain, and those who benefit by it are the manufacturers of woollens and a few lines of metals. In other branches of trade in which they are brought into competition with the United States the manufacturers of Great Britain are falling to secure a

fair share of the business. It will be thus seen that it is the woollen manufacturers of Canada who suffer most from the preferential tariff. Now Mr. Bell contends that this is not dealing fairly with those men who have invested their money in the production of woollen goods in this country. He claims that if it is necessary to grant a preference to the output of the factories of England, a general tax should be levied throughout Canada, and each citizen should be called upon to bear his portion of the burden placed upon the country. A system which protects some industries and excludes others from its advantages seems to be hardly understood by the government, but in the end that system, if allowed to go to its legitimate conclusion, must lead to disaster to the industries of the country, and the government will eventually be forced to deal with the subject.

Mr. Bell thinks that the government should have done something more to extend the trade of Canada. He had expected that some effort would have been made to secure closer trade relations with the West Indies. With the addition of the West Indies to the markets for Canadian goods he says we would be unwise to exchange places with the United States, powerful as they are. The West Indies are a contiguous territory, which would enable us to develop some valuable markets. But no evidence has yet been given of a single instance in which the government has lifted a finger to extend our trade. They have moved in an opposite direction, as shown in the case of Germany, where Canadian trade has been considerably diminished during the past two or three years. In 1883 Sir Leonard Tilley enunciated this principle on behalf of the conservative administration: "If we fail to make satisfactory arrangements with the governments that do not place the natural products of the mother country on an equal footing with those of any other country, we will ask parliament at the next session to impose a duty of ten per cent. additional on their products until they grant us such terms." This paragraph contains in a nutshell the ideas of the opposition members in regard to preferential trade. Mr. Fielding insisted that the present government were following on just such lines, and Mr. Bell called for particulars. Mr. Fielding contends that he has imposed a material difference, inasmuch as he has granted a preference between English and German goods. Mr. Bell thought this a most unworthy statement, and considered it about the size to show the calibre that suits the finance minister. What Mr. Fielding really does is to put Germany on an inequality with one country in the world and to treat her exactly equal to every other country in the world, and Mr. Bell felt tempted to use even the word "evaston" in reference to the unfortunate remark of the finance minister. Mr. Fielding was clearly out to the quick by Mr. Bell's exposure of the childishness of the exposure of the relations between the two countries, and frequently interrupted the member for Pictou, but the latter was clear on his subject and was able to meet and repulse any advance made by the maker of budgets.

Mr. Bell had a flag at the ankles of Mr. Fielding and his colleagues, running around the country advocating free trade, when they were really moving in the direction of a protective policy. Mr. Fielding had a reputation when premier of Nova Scotia of doing nothing and drawing his salary, and he seems to be carrying on this same policy in the government at Ottawa. Mr. Bell quoted several utterances of the minister of finance made before he came into power to show how radically different had been the policy of the administration from that proposed prior to their election. It was a lovely thing to look upon these gentlemen pointing about the country and denouncing protection, the bloated monopolists and the thieves and robbers; and praying no doubt night and morning for the salvation of that unhappy victim who had been bled white, and it was a lovely thing to know that when the time the hon. gentlemen of the government were carrying in their breasts this lovely reservation: "That it was never their idea when they came into power to destroy by one fell movement the policy of protection." That was the result? Fielding got out of the hole into which he and his colleagues had crawled in an unguarded moment. The issue which placed the government, not between the two horns of the dilemma but between two comfortable seats, on either side of which they might reach office, was served them for a time, but the people would eventually awaken to the fact that the government was playing fast and loose and then something definite would have to be adopted in regard to a trade policy.

Mr. Bell hopes that when the change comes the government will blunder into some situation which will be an improvement on the existing one. When they inaugurated their preferential trade policy they simply tumbled into it. And what was the result? After tumbling in they found that they had admitted not only British manufactured goods but the goods of many other countries, and if it had not been for the assistance rendered by the old country it is hard to tell just where the Laurier administration might have landed.

Seeing the plight of the Canadian government, Mr. Chamberlain came to the rescue and by the abrogation of the treaties between the motherland and other continental countries he succeeded in saving Canada from serious consequences. Mr. Bell points out that the government has never really made any serious attempts to secure a preference for Canadian goods in the markets of Great Britain. They have told the people of Canada that Mr. Chamberlain and others of the home government are opposed to any such concessions. Now Mr. Bell is not so easily alarmed as the minister of finance, and so he urges that it should be in the interests of the dominion for the government to set the example to Downing street. With united action on the part of Australia and the other self-governing colonies, Mr. Bell feels that the people of Great Britain can

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be brought to realize that conditions are rapidly changing and that the success of the empire depends largely upon the attention given to inter-imperial interests. It is a progressive policy, one which will doubtless commend itself to the thinking people of the dominion, and let us hope that the government will, before long, take action on these lines as they have on others set forth by the conservative party during the past.

OTTAWA, March 18.—Mr. R. L. Borden, the leader of the opposition, in moving the resolution which sets forth the policy of the conservative party, yesterday afternoon, did so in a manner that must commend itself to the people of Canada. Only once during his address was he interrupted by government members, and in this single instance he concentrated his fire so rapidly on the disturbers of the peace that they were only too glad to crawl into those obscure holes which they apparently filled during the earlier stages of the opposition. Mr. Borden's address was by its very nature a masterpiece. It was an interesting spectacle; on the one side was a man who has had little experience in the political arena, and who has none of that political clatter which characterizes some of the leaders of the government. He had come before the house as a member of a large section of the Canadian people and to present their views to parliament. He did so clearly, concisely and forcibly. Mr. Borden was perhaps a little nervous during the earlier stages of his remarks, but he rapidly recovered himself and went on to the finish he not only commanded the attention of the entire house, but he had the front seats filled wherever there was an opportunity for a member to move up towards him. The case made out against the government of the opposition was on every point upon which he touched, Mr. Borden made a strong case and showed the interests of Canada have been systematically and persistently neglected. He urged upon Sir Wilfrid and his colleagues the necessity of at once making an attempt to do some thing, and in last words as leader of the great conservative party breathed in an imperial and national spirit which does him credit.

So strong were Mr. Borden's arguments that the government programme was entirely changed. It was the intention when the house met, that Mr. Russell would follow Mr. Borden. When the leader of the opposition had nearly concluded his remarks, however, he was so full of energy that he awakened the fact that it would require their heaviest guns to repulse the leader of the opposition's attack, and accordingly messengers were sent out to announce that the premier would replace Mr. Russell. Mr. Borden had evidently hit his base and cut deep and no man appreciates that more than the premier himself. Mr. Borden had challenged the minister of finance, the minister of trade and commerce, the head of the government, to get up in their places and justify certain statements they had made at different times while campaigning throughout the country. It might have been reasonably expected that Sir Wilfrid would have answered some of the defies thrown across the floors of the house. But he was evidently unable to do so. And so he turned aside the arrows as best he could and led the house off on a wild goose chase which at least might have the effect of removing from their minds any impression which Mr. Borden had made.

It was only a few days ago that Sir Wilfrid and his following demanded of the opposition an annunciation of policy. Mr. Fielding was particularly anxious that Mr. Borden, or somebody authorized to do so, should tell the country the views of the conservative party in regard to trade matters. Yesterday Mr. Borden fully answered the challenge, but he did more. In turn, he challenged the government, now that they had the conservative policy, to express their views in regard to its weaknesses and strength, should it possess any of the latter essential quality. But Sir Wilfrid when he received the information for which he had so earnestly asked, treated it in a manner which ill became the premier minister of Canada. On a former occasion he had expressed his intention of taking this question seriously, yet almost his first remark in reply to Mr. Borden was that the conservatives had made propositions which were not to be considered seriously for a single moment. Judging from the subsequent remarks of Sir Wilfrid, he was as good as his word and did not give very serious consideration to the several important proposals which Mr. Borden placed before him. Whether it was that he was unable to, or whether

it was that he was unwilling to give them that attention they deserve, is a matter which is only known to himself. Sir Wilfrid started out as usual with a flow of oratory in which he hoped to bury the arguments of the leader of the opposition, and in this course he justified the remarks of Mr. Borden in the opening of his address when he (Borden) told the house that the premier was inclined to lose sight of the real issue and side track it by oratory or pathos. Sir Wilfrid's speech on this occasion sounded well, as most other speeches do, but when it was subsequently perused and weighed it was found that he had said absolutely nothing in refutation of Mr. Borden's charges.

The policy laid down by the conservative party dates back to 1878, or even earlier. Mr. Borden referred to this feature of his resolution, and Sir Wilfrid was inclined to laugh at a policy which had endured the test of 23 years. This, of course, is not to be taken as a compliment, but it is well to remember that the liberals have changed their platform time and time again. It is hard for them to conceive of a policy which should be supported for the sake of its virtues. All liberal platforms placed before the public so far have been asked to support the same old subject, the supporters thereof, in power. But the remarks of Sir Wilfrid, out of power, have never had the effect of shaking the confidence of the liberal conservative party in the national policy, and there is no reason why Sir Wilfrid should be able to do so. Certainly he did not do anything yesterday to attack the real issue, and if he is to gain the confidence of the people in his fight against a policy for Canadian working men and Canadian industries, he must come out fair and square into the open and announce his own views and those of his following as to whether these interests are to be abandoned and betrayed or whether he is once again to adopt the policy of the conservative party and thus confer lasting benefits on the people of Canada.

Last night Clarke Wallace got in one on the prime minister for the latter's attempted repulse of the conservative policy. The member for West York submitted that it was the government's policy to keep the British subjects to approach the throne at all times with petitions on all questions. Here in Canada, however, this rule seemingly failed to apply. When the leader of the opposition had approached his majesty, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his associates had to crawl, "keep off the grass." Mr. Wallace suggests would be a fitting notice to place at the feet of the prime minister. This view of the case describes fully the position the government has assumed in its defence of its policy. It invites and repulses. It repulses the British subjects and then treats them as if they were utterly unworthy of consideration. The government will receive advice as to how they might best catch the applause of the country, but if they insist on looking so lightly upon suggestions given in the name of the people, they will be inclined to refuse to supply them with platforms in the future.

The resolution which Mr. Borden offered the house for its consideration involves the principles which have been upheld ever since the conservative party has become a power in this country. Although they are prepared to encourage trade and consider the offers of any country, they hold that the rights of Canadians must first be restored, and that this is not the position announced that he will ever be ready to offer the support of himself and his following to any government which will attempt to further the imperialistic spirit. "But in the carrying out of such a policy the rights of the colonies must be given every consideration. In this proposition Sir Wilfrid Laurier concurred, but seemingly it was the only one in which he did give a settled and definite answer.

Mr. Fielding has frequently stated, and Sir Wilfrid Laurier supported him yesterday, in his contention that the British people were quite unwilling to grant favors to Canada or any other colony. The government say to the opposition, it is impossible to get any mutuality in this matter, and they have announced this time and time again, until the British people are quite confident that no attempt will be made by Canada to obtain concessions in the markets of the old country, such as the people of the United Kingdom have obtained here. Sir Wilfrid quoted the resolution of the Cobden Club to show that it would be utterly useless for him to attempt to approach the government of the mother country in this matter, and so he contents himself with sitting idly by the wayside, justifying his social position, and giving it to another. This is the position which has been carried out in any attempt on our part to improve these trade relations. He sees in the Australian Commonwealth a lever which will be of great value in moving public opinion of England in favor of some adequate concession to the colonies, as a whole, and he announces that his party will never rest until the agitation for a mutually preferential tariff has been brought to a successful termination. Sir Wilfrid assured the house that so far as the liberal party was concerned, no effort would be made to approach the British government again. He is satisfied that Canada's reward should be the flattering notices of the English press, commending this country on its loyalty in opening up its markets to the British workmen. It gives the premier a certain amount of popularity, and allowed him to pose as the moral of the loyal, but some of the Upper Canadian papers are inclined to think that Bourassa's speeches have been made with this same end in view, so that this cannot be taken as a sufficient reason why we should neglect to secure every possible benefit for citizens of this country.

Another feature of Sir Wilfrid's speech, which shows clearly the trend of the government policy, was his reference to the election which takes place tomorrow in North Bruce. The leader of the opposition made an eloquent and well advised appeal at the conclusion of his speech yesterday for religious and racial tolerance. He

promised to do everything in his power as leader of the conservative party to bring about the unity of all creeds and classes. But what did Sir Wilfrid do? He concluded his speech in a way which contrasted unfavorably with that of his opponent. His effort was directed to calling attention to what he alleges to be a race agitation in the riding of North Bruce under the auspices of the conservative party. And so hopes to feed the fire which so many of us have seen in Quebec during the recent elections. The premier's remarks will be circulated in every grit newspaper from one end of Quebec to the other, will be commented upon, and the electors of that province will be asked to believe that the English are endeavoring to drive them out of the country and depriving them of their national rights. This may sound a little strong to the people of the maritime provinces, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the feast is being held right here. It is all very well for Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Mr. Tarte to deny in Halifax that they ever made any appeals to racial passion, but that assurance when given in this part of the country would be laughed to scorn. Every clipping from an English speaking paper which reflects in the slightest degree upon the French is carefully cut out and circulated by liberal campaigners in Quebec, and thus on election day they are enabled to find an appeal to passion to carry everything before them. The wonder is that the conservatives were able to carry the seven seats they now hold in that province.

OTTAWA, March 20.—These are the days when theories connected with the grit protection-revenue-free-trade policy are being exploded. After three years' trial of the system inaugurated by Mr. Fielding, there can be no doubt that it is a huge failure, but the government insist upon standing by it through thick and thin, and positively refuse to amend it in any way. The ideas expressed by the ministers in past years, their promises as to what they would do when in power, and the common sense features of the amendments suggested by the conservatives have all failed to induce Mr. Fielding to move in the matter. The conservatives, during the 18 years they were in power, arranged a tariff, which by its results, proved that it was well suited to the requirements of Canada. When they retired from the government the grits promptly adopted the tariff and have since steadily adhered to it. Of course it is annoying to find one's property neglected and so the members of the opposition have been suggesting some improvements. They see wherein the present tariff is weak, and are endeavoring to induce Mr. Fielding to act in accordance with the ideas as to what will be of value to the many interests of the dominion. But the hon. minister of finance, while he was willing to expropriate the best things in the former administration, is not willing to acknowledge the error; so he sets to work to make the liberal conservative policy that is now in force, but a brand new out and out system, that of revenue tariff.

At the liberal convention of 1893, the minister of trade and commerce and the prime minister told the country how they intended to manage affairs when they came into power. After vainly endeavoring to lead Canadians astray by their policies of free trade, unrestricted reciprocity, commercial union, etc., they flopped round to a revenue tax. This is what Sir Richard Cartwright said of protection on that occasion: "Taxation is an evil that nothing but the needs of government can justify. When we are in power and don't see to it that the skin of the bear until the bear is shot; yet I think the toy bear is about to be skinned—we will free the people from protection, which is a fraud and a delusion and a robbery, for it is robbery to take money from one man and give it to another." This and other utterances were made by the minister of trade and commerce, and surely they are sufficient to convince the most sceptical, that the government were at any rate, at that time, staunch believers in free trade or tariff for revenue only. They have been in power for four years and they have not made one effort to carry out their principles.

Mr. Smith, of Wentworth, a new name in this house, who is doing good work for the opposition, exposed many bogus government principles. Today, in its main and essential elements, the tariff is just as the conservative party left it. It is just as much a protective tariff as it was in 1886. It is true that the old tariff has been tinkered with by Mr. Fielding, but he has cut off a fill here and a founce there, to make the people believe that he is carrying out in a small way the principles that he so long advocated. This system of protection is being carried on by people who did not believe in it. The minister of trade and commerce, who professes it today, was one of the strongest supporters of free trade and the other terms of trade relations proposed with the United States.

Mr. Smith points out that the government is making claims for its preferential tariff which are unjustified by existing conditions. The people of Canada have been told that the preferential trade has resulted in a great increase in commerce between this country and the mother land. It is further stated that the reduction of taxation, which has been carried out by the government, has also encouraged the importation of foreign goods. In the United States, Mr. Smith finds that in 1894, \$27,645,792 worth of dutiable goods were imported; while in 1900, in the same country, \$48,733,330 worth were imported, or nearly double the amount imported in 1894. The United States is not a country in which a revenue tariff was operated, and yet this great increase of dutiable goods had resulted. The United States, like Canada, has simply felt the benefit of a great wave of prosperity which had been enjoyed by the world at large, and so it was that the liberal party were able to show such a creditable financial statement.

Looking at their general tariff, Mr. Smith claimed that it was as high as that which existed under liberal conservative rule, and for every reduction

(Continued on Page Seven.)



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CHIGNECTO MARINE RY.

A. D. Provand, One of the Directors of the Company,

Endeavoring to Induce the Dominion Government to Give Additional Financial Backing to the Project.

OTTAWA, March 16.—A. D. Provand, ex-M. P. for the Black Friars district of Glasgow, Scotland, and one of the directors of the Chignecto Marine Transport Railway Company, is in the city endeavoring to induce the government to give additional financial backing to the project. Mr. Provand has made several visits to this country in connection with the scheme and on Friday he expects to meet the government in regard to it and submit to them an appeal on behalf of himself and his fellow stockholders. Mr. Provand contends that the British public were induced to subscribe some millions of dollars worth of stock on the strength of inducements held out to them by the government of Canada. It was at first proposed that an appeal should be made to the people of the United Kingdom against assisting any further Canadian enterprises, but other counsel prevailed and the result is that Mr. Provand is once more seeking the assistance which has been withheld for some time. Since his arrival here he has had interviews with the majority of the cabinet ministers.

Mr. Provand, in a lengthy treatise of the case, gives the history of the company's operations and submits the following proposition to the consideration of the government: After giving a history of the work in connection with the construction of the marine railway so far as it has been carried on, Mr. Provand submits these explanations as to why the government should grant the assistance sought for: The scheme originated in Canada. It was brought to London fortified by evidence and guarantees. The chief railway engineer to the Canadian government reported in its favor. Boards of trade and other public bodies expressed their approval. It has governmental, parliamentary, ministerial, engineering and commercial guarantees and recommendations in its favor.

On the faith of the acts of the Canadian parliament authorizing and subsidizing the railway, the investors subscribed. The bonds were taken at \$108-1/2 per \$100 bond, and the preference shares at par and could not receive more than 7 per cent. dividend, and might receive much less. The securities were taken on terms which they could never have commanded if the investors had not been relying on the good faith of Canada.

If the Chignecto railway had been an ordinary one, almost three-fourths of the subsidies would have been earned and received. To refuse the appeal, and give it to another, would have the extent of the whole of the money they have already expended on the railway, say \$4,000,000, an act which would be without a parallel in the history of such enterprises.

One treatment is totally different from the other given to Canadian companies. But in every case in England and Scotland, voteless and without political influence. British investors when expending their own money, as they were on the Chignecto railway, have invariably had all the time granted to them required to complete the work. The Chignecto railway is the only exception. The treatment accorded to the investors in this work is at variance with the rule of other governments, and contrary to that of the Canadian government, when dealing with Canadian contractors and investors.

Mr. Provand has written to the prime minister asking for the appointment of a select committee to hear the case, and report.

He says he has been eight weeks at Ottawa and had many interviews with the government. The company have been ready since June, 1894, to recommence construction and complete the railway. He has been here ever since then seeking to have the subsidy renewed. The company consider that it is entitled to this or to compensation. Mr. Fielding has proposed that the company recommission proceedings by introducing a private bill to revive the company's charter, but it is objected that to introduce a private bill would entail the loss of much time and money and be without value unless a subsidy were forthcoming. Mr. Provand therefore presses for the appointment of a select committee to hear evidence and report to the house.

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