

fairs of the country. I think the ex-Minister of Finance was particularly severe upon us in that respect. I do not wish to apologize at all, I do not feel that any apology is necessary; but I think if that hon. gentleman would look back upon his own history, would look back upon what he was able to accomplish himself, he might perhaps think that the Government were not deserving of the censure which he seemed anxious to heap upon them in reference to that matter. We have had revisions of the tariff before. We had a revision of the tariff made by that hon. gentleman in 1894, and I find from the record of "Hansard" that on February 14, 1893, the hon. gentleman, in making his Budget speech, while alterations in the tariff were expected by the country, found himself not prepared to introduce those changes in the tariff, and he gave this as his reason. He said:

What I want to state is this, that information has been gathered by the Government, particularly by myself, during the past year, and information will be gathered during the coming season; that the Minister of Trade and Commerce and myself, with the two level-headed business men who control the Customs and the Inland Revenue, propose during the coming year, not only to listen to the complaints and the pleas of people who come to Ottawa to see us, but we propose to supplement that by a personal inspection and investigation of the various industries of the country.

That was the hon. gentleman's statement, that during the past year he had been gathering all the information possible in order to arrive at an intelligent decision on this important question; that in addition he announced that he himself as Minister of Trade and Commerce and the two Controllers, the Controller of Customs and the Controller of Inland Revenue, were to spend the intervening time, between the close of that session and the next meeting of the House, in gathering such information as might be necessary in order to intelligently introduce a tariff in the following session. That session closed on April 1st, and from then to March 15th of the next year those four hon. gentlemen were engaged in seeking information to supplement that already gathered during the previous year by the Minister of Finance; yet the ex-Minister of Finance rises in his place and charges the Government with being unready, and lectures them, and moreover states that they had thereby paralyzed the whole business of the country.

What were the facts with respect to the present Government? The Government was only formed in July. The House met on August 19th and closed on October 5th, and from that time to the following session was the whole period available to make an investigation in order to arrive at what we thought the best conclusion, and the House met within a few days as early this year as the House met after hon. gentlemen opposite had taken more than two years

to make their preparations. Their tariff was introduced on 27th March. But on 12th April the hon. gentleman proposed to amend the resolutions by adding forty resolutions to those brought down, and they were not concurred in completely until 5th June, ten weeks subsequently, and after thirty-five of the resolutions had been amended in committee. With that record the Government need not make any apology, for they have done in comparatively few months what had taken more than a year to do by the previous Government, and nevertheless their work had to be amended to the extent I have stated. I need not say more on that point, except to refer to the alleged business paralysis owing to delay. What proof has the hon. gentleman of that statement? Let hon. gentlemen opposite take the trade returns for the nine months of the present year and see if there is any evidence that a blow has been given to business interests or not. Let hon. gentlemen point out individual instances, if they can, where business has been paralyzed and industries closed and the channels of trade and commerce impeded. They have not done so yet, although, of course, other hon. gentlemen will follow. I have seen in the public press instances cited in which industries have been closed, but I have noticed that if this occurred it was for the purpose of stock-taking, and the proprietors of the establishments declared over their own signatures that they had not closed down on account of any uncertainty in respect to the tariff, but in accordance to their usual custom. Business was not paralyzed, and there was no reason why it should be, because the business community had confidence in the hon. gentlemen at the head of affairs. They realized that the Government would make no change of such a nature as would imperil any legitimate business, and business went on in its usual way, and I challenge hon. gentlemen opposite to furnish any evidence that there was that business paralysis of which they have spoken.

There is no doubt that when any tariff changes are anticipated, there is more or less uncertainty, probably more or less anxiety, common to every expected revision of the tariff, and which we could not expect to be absent on the present occasion; but to say that business had been paralyzed, that business had been impeded or been called to a halt, was a statement not borne out by the facts. What did we do? Interviews were held in public, in open daylight, to which all classes of the community were invited, and they came before us. Hearings were given to all those who had representations to make. The Government made themselves aware of the business conditions of the country, of the peculiar conditions surrounding particular industries. They gave ear to all, they availed themselves of every source of information given to them, and having availed themselves of all this in-