

privately on many occasions since. I was not speaking for the government, I was not laying down a policy for the government of Canada; I was discussing questions which are not to-day an issue in the political arena of this country. I was discussing the relationship of this country to the other parts of the empire, addressing a group of young men in the city of Montreal who were interested in economical and social subjects, and addressing them on an occasion when these particular questions were no longer an issue in any political contest. I did studiously refrain, as I believe it to be the duty of a public man in Canada, from entering into political contests in other self-governing parts of the empire, for I believe it is right and best that we in Canada should let the other self-governing parts of the empire decide their questions for themselves without our trying to exercise pressure or to interfere in their political contests, just in the same way as I should expect the other parts of the empire and the public men in these other parts of the empire to refrain from trying to exert pressure on the people of Canada in their political contests. I think this explanation is due to myself as well as to those who seem to have taken an interest in my remarks. I will only add, Sir, that I believe that in speaking as I did I fairly represented and expressed the views of the farmers of Canada on this question.

Some hon. MEMBERS. No.

Mr. FISHER. Hon. gentlemen say 'no';—well, they can have their opinions and I can have mine, but I will give my reasons for thinking that I did so. During the past six months or so I have travelled from one ocean to the other through this Dominion; have attended large gatherings of farmers in British Columbia, and have met the farmers in Alberta, in Saskatchewan, in Manitoba; I have attended the great agricultural conventions of Ontario, of Quebec, and the maritime provinces. I have mingled with these men on all occasions they have met together to discuss their interests and their affairs; I have discussed with them everything they brought up on these occasions; I have watched to see what it was they wished to discuss, and I say emphatically now, that on no occasion was this question of a preference in the motherland for our products brought up or discussed by the farmers in any way.

Mr. HAGGART. How do you know their opinion then?

Mr. FISHER. Because I give the farmers of this country credit, that if they feel strongly on a question, and if they have opinions to express upon a public question they will express their opinions with no uncertain sound and in no uncertain voice.

Mr. FISHER.

Mr. COCHRANE. And you thought, because they did not express their opinion, that they agreed with you.

Mr. FISHER. My hon. friend need not be too hasty; my hon. friend must not put words into my mouth. I do not try to force my opinions on other people, and I do not jump to the conclusion that everybody agrees with me.

Mr. COCHRANE. But you did.

Mr. FISHER. My hon. friend is a glorious example of the contrary—he never agrees with me.

Mr. COCHRANE. Well, the Minister of Agriculture must be another example. He came to the conclusion that because they did not express their opinions they agreed with him.

Mr. SPEAKER. Order.

Mr. FISHER.—Again my hon. friend is jumping to conclusions, and is putting those conclusions into my mouth.

Mr. COCHRANE. That is the only foundation you had to base your speech on.

Mr. SPEAKER. Order.

Mr. FISHER. But I have another reason for thinking I am correct. We have had a tariff investigation lately in this country. We have had a commission which has visited all the important centres of Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific. I am glad to say that on many occasions the farmers of Canada have taken the opportunity of going before the commission and presenting their views and discussing their interests, and I have no doubt that on many occasions they have discussed the question of the preference which Canada extends to imports from the mother country and have expressed strong views in regard to that preference; but I have never heard or noticed in the press reports of one single instance of the farmers of Canada suggesting before that commission that the question of a preference in the motherland should be connected with our preference, or that our preference should be made dependent upon a preference in the motherland. I have searched carefully to see whether anything of that kind has occurred, and I have asked the members of the commission who heard the representations of the farmers in all parts of Canada and they can not recall one single instance when the farmers of Canada brought that question before them or discussed it or presented any views with regard to it.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Does the hon. gentleman then conclude that the farmers of Canada are opposed to the policy of the government as set out in the resolution of the Colonial conference and in the memorandum of the Canadian government which I read this afternoon?

Mr. FISHER. No, I do not. I am prepared to say that so far as the preference