

pledges which the Liberal party made to the people of this country regarding tariff revision have been redeemed in every particular. I am quite well aware that such is not the opinion of the hon. leader of the Opposition (Sir Charles Tupper). I had great pleasure in reading the hon. gentleman's speech, made at Winnipeg the other day, because whenever the hon. gentleman does speak, he speaks eloquently and forcibly, and I always like to read what he has to say. In that speech I found the following paragraph:—

Who is there that does not know that these gentlemen went over this country for eighteen years denouncing the policy of protection and declaring that every vestige of protection should be uprooted and scattered to the winds, and that a free trade policy should prevail.

Now, I quite agree with the hon. leader of the Opposition, that if such had been the conduct of the Liberal party during eighteen years, that party would be unworthy the confidence of the people. But I do not agree with the hon. gentleman in his statement of fact. By putting an extreme interpretation upon some particular catch phrase, by carefully selecting some paragraph from some particular speech, he might strive to create the impression that the speaker thus quoted was in favour of absolute free trade, and that such was the policy of the Liberal party. But all that does not alter the outstanding, the underlying fact, that the Liberal party never had any intention of abolishing the customs duties of this country. The old Liberal policy did not do anything of the kind. The Liberal party was in power before, and it had a tariff policy of about 17½ per cent. That was not a free trade policy. That could not be called a free trade policy which imposed a duty on goods imported. What I understand by a free trade policy is a policy which would allow the manufactures of other countries to come into this country free of duty. A policy of that kind is an impossible one, one which never was intended and never was expected. We all know that even the old Liberal tariff of 17½ per cent would not now meet our requirements, the expenses of the country had been increased to such an extent that it was impossible to go back to that tariff; and it became necessary to raise the duties in order to meet the increased requirements of the country. But what did the Liberal party promise? It pledged itself to reduce the tariff; it pledged itself to do what it could to apply freer trade principles to our tariff consistent with a proper regard to the interests and the requirements of the country, and it pledged itself also not to overlook the fact that we had not as free a hand to deal with the tariff as we would have had if there had been no protection during the past eighteen years. And I claim that the Liberal party has carried out its pledges in

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this respect. What did it accomplish in the tariff revision of last year? The duties were greatly reduced on a long list of goods—I feel disposed to make this statement because such substantial reduction is not generally known throughout the country. The duties under the old tariff were so mixed up on the specific and the ad valorem basis that nobody could tell what the percentage of duty was. But when you combine these duties and convert them into a percentage on the value, you then begin to understand what the reductions really were. It is not my intention to go into the particulars, but I have the document here and can prove what I say. I say that the Liberal party last session reduced the tariff on a great many goods manufactured in this country to the extent of 10, 15, 25, 35 and 40 per cent. I call these heavy reductions in the tariff on goods imported into this country, and I say, therefore, that the Government have fulfilled their pledges to reduce the tariff as much as possible, and I am inclined to believe that no one thought for a moment that the Government would have lowered the duties to the extent they did. The tariff was pared down to a revenue basis, which is the basis on which the Liberal party has always held our tariff should be imposed. Extreme protection was struck off entirely. The ordinary requirements of the country were considered, and the tariff reduced to a revenue basis. That revenue tariff benefits all the interests and industries of the country much more effectually than could a protective tariff. In that respect I claim, therefore, that the tariff has been reduced materially and levelled down to a revenue basis, and in so doing the Government have fulfilled the pledges they had made, because it was never for a moment contemplated that these duties should be entirely struck off and the manufacturers of other countries admitted free. I desire also to repeat here what I have said elsewhere. We have had a tariff agitation for a long number of years, we had a revision last year, and the time has now come when we should have permanency and stability. Permanency and stability are required in the tariff of a country to enable its trade and business to extend; and now that a new era of prosperity and business revival is dawning upon us, it would be a great mistake indeed to discuss impending changes in the tariff. I do not mean to say for one moment that there should be no change whatever for some years to come, or a considerable time to come. New conditions and circumstances may arise which will require some changes in the tariff; but what I say is that the tariff revision of last session was so complete and satisfactory to the country at large that even many members of the Conservative party have been unable to find very serious fault with it,