

remarks—that is charging the prime minister of this country with having omitted to avail himself of what was said to be an offer to give Canada preferential trade. I say emphatically that there is no scintilla of justification for such a statement. I shall very briefly go over the case, and I think I can satisfy hon. gentlemen that no such deduction can be drawn by them; that if Mr. Chamberlain and every member of the government were to pledge themselves to such a policy it could not be accomplished. The people of Great Britain would not consent to it; the parliament of Great Britain would not adopt any such measure. What I state here is this, that had Sir Wilfrid Laurier pursued any other course than he did, he would have failed to obtain the denunciation of the Belgian and German treaties, and he could not have placed Canada in the high place she occupies to-day in political circle in Great Britain, as manifested by the high price that our debentures command to-day. It is the first time that any British colony has sold its debentures at two and a half per cent interest, and our standing is farther shown by the amount of capital coming into Canada for investment and the attention given to Canada in British financial circles. In order to thoroughly appreciate the obstacles in the way of preferential trade with the mother country, I invite hon. gentlemen's attention to the history of this matter. In 1881 the late government, in its desire to favour the sentiment that was rising in Canada for preferential trade with Great Britain and, knowing the difficulty there was in consequence of the various treaties containing what is called the favoured-nations clause, they passed an Order in Council deputing Sir Alexander Galt, then High Commissioner, to make an appeal to the Imperial authorities to relieve Canada from these treaties. The answer was that it was impossible to grant the request. They could not consider it at all. In 1891, ten years after, the parliament of Canada unanimously adopted a resolution praying the British government to denounce the treaties. The petition is given in the last paragraph :

The Senate and House of Commons therefore humbly request Your Majesty to take such steps as may be necessary to denounce and terminate the effect of the provisions referred to, as well as the treaties with the German Zollverein and with the Kingdom of Belgium and with any other nation in respect of which such provisions are now in force.

To that a cold refusal was also given. Then probably the most important meeting of representative men outside of Great Britain took place, as you all know in July, 1894, under the presidency of my hon. friend opposite. This question naturally attracted the attention of the distinguished men from all the colonies who met in this chamber. It was probably the most prominent question discussed. At the time the British Empire League was in full force and life and there was a feeling throughout the British Empire that it was desirable there should be some closer commercial relations between the colonies and the mother country. It was a most laudable ambition, and one would have thought it would at once have commanded the attention of Great Britain. At that conference which the premiers and the leading men of the Empire outside of Great Britain attended here, they adopted this resolution after discussing the question fully :

That this conference is of opinion that any provisions in existing treaties between Great Britain and any foreign power which prevent the self-governing dependencies of the empire from entering into agreements of commercial reciprocity with each other, or with Great Britain, should be removed.

The representative of the Imperial government—I have not the report of his speech here—I believe, intimated that it was unlikely that any such request would be acceded to. The formal answer came, however, from the British government in a despatch from the Marquis of Ripon to the Governor General of Canada, and the various governments of the different colonies in which he refers to that resolution :

In regard to the separate denunciation of these articles, it may be stated that both the Belgian and German governments have been asked whether they would consent to the abrogation of these particular clauses without the rest of the treaties being terminated, and the reply in both cases was to the effect that the clauses could not be denounced apart from the rest of the treaty.

Now, that is the answer to the largest gathering of colonial statesmen that ever took place. Adverting to the reasons that prompted that action on the part of Great Britain, I shall briefly call attention to what Canada asks. Canada, through the Imperial Confederation League, and through other channels, asked that her products should have a preference in the British market. The answer has always been that it was too insignificant to discuss, that it would be