

clause, and that it would be impossible to shut them out. What has been the result? Here we have a sheaf of Orders in Council extending from 23rd April to 5th November, containing what? Day after day the scales have fallen from the eyes of hon. gentlemen opposite, and they have learned that all the statements from this side of the House were absolutely correct and could not be controverted; country after country has been admitted and order after order has been passed, and hon. gentlemen opposite find they have only succeeded in throwing the business and trade of this country into inextricable confusion by their absolute inability to deal with a question that ought not to have required the slightest discussion at the hands of any intelligent man who had any knowledge whatever of public affairs. That is the position that these gentlemen are in, and what is the result? Where, I ask hon. gentlemen opposite, is this vaunted preference for England that was heralded far and wide by them? They admit themselves now that it has no existence, and that they have admitted country after country to the preference. In all this, there was no excuse for the Government. They had under their own hands, in the archives, all the data that would enable them to deal with this subject in a business-like manner, and attention to which would have prevented them experiencing all these humiliations they have suffered, and all the confusion into which they have thrown the business of the country. As I pointed out at the time, Canada is a part of the International Customs Union, and in consideration of the money paid by this country, the Government receive from day to day, from the Central Office in Belgium, any alterations which take place in the customs tariffs of those countries which come within the purview of the International Customs Union. The Government have no excuse for the manner in which they acted. The declaration of the right hon. the First Minister that there was no country in the world except England that was entitled, under that resolution, to this preferential tariff, has been proven to be utterly foundationless. This pretended preference for England has proved to be an utter delusion and a snare, and all this furore which was caused in this country and in England as to the preferential tariff being valuable to the mother country, has been demonstrated to be an absolute farce. That is the position in which these hon. gentlemen are. When the Minister of Finance introduced these tariff resolutions to the House, I ventured to say to him: You cannot give this preference to England alone, and his answer to me was: Well, we have done it. With all the arrogance that the most profound ignorance would warrant, the Finance Minister said: You must not tell me, we cannot do it, for we have done it, and to-morrow morning every customs-house within the Dominion of Canada

from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean will enter British goods at a reduction of one-eighth. I told the hon. gentleman then: You are only humiliating yourself all the more; you will have to admit twenty other countries to this same privilege, and you will be forced to the humiliation of instructing your officers, whom you have now misled, that they will have to refund every cent of duty that all these countries have paid in excess of the duties charged on English goods. That is the predicament of the Government to-day, and one more humiliating it would be impossible to imagine. Read this sheaf of instructions sent out day after day, as the scales fell from their eyes, and you find that they have discovered that twenty-six countries, in addition to England, are entitled to this privilege. This is the result, notwithstanding that the First Minister declared with all confidence that his Government was perfectly satisfied that there was not another country in the world but England which was entitled to the privilege. That is the humiliation which has fallen upon the Government of Canada in connection with this pretended preference which was put upon the Statute-book, and which will stand there as a monument of the utter incapacity of this Government to deal with a question which no intelligent person could possibly be excused for not knowing how to deal with properly. I am not quite sure that it was altogether incapacity, but it is either an evidence of the most crass ignorance, or worse still, it was done with knowledge of the fact, and was an attempt to mislead the House and the country in reference to a most important fiscal question. As the Minister of Customs (Mr. Paterson) is well aware, the Government provided that all these goods from Great Britain must be direct importation. They changed that, and any person who goes through this sheaf of explanations and instructions given to Government officials will find, that they countermanded all these orders and provided that when goods came from Great Britain, whether direct or indirect importations, they must be admitted at the reduced rate. As a result, the most inextricable confusion has been imported into the whole business.

I am glad to see the Finance Minister in his place, because he has no doubt a vivid recollection that when I ventured in my modest way to suggest, that there was doubt as to the possibility of such a thing as he proposed to do under this resolution, he retorted: We have done it. Well, Sir, you did do it, and what did you do? Why, you placed on the records of this country, evidence of the incapacity of the Finance Minister of Canada to understand the first principles of a fiscal question with which he had undertaken to deal.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE (Mr. Fielding). I am glad I came in time.