

civil rights, and after many weeks of disputation and litigation their lawyers rose and announced to the court that they, the lawyers, had decided on a settlement of the entire matter, had entered into a formal, binding, sealed agreement to settle the whole question "on the principle of justice." That is what evolved from the promise of the Speech from the Throne of a year ago. Consequently, no reference to it appears in the Speech from the Throne to-day.

There is still another subject upon which the Speech is silent. It is a subject that attained no little prominence in the contest of 1921, a subject, indeed, that has been more a bone of political contention, that has been more the subject of illusory hope and final disappointment than any other subject in the politics of our country; I refer to the tariff question. Hon. members, of course, will do the government this justice, that the reference of a year ago was exceedingly delicate, exceedingly gentle, exceedingly vague;—there would be something done in the way of revision; it could not, unfortunately, be much on account of the short space of time that they had had, but something in the way of revision would be done and done last session. The budget, it will be remembered, finally came down, and I remember well how the feelings which I expressed in the debate on the Speech from the Throne were amply vindicated by the event, how the high hopes of the mover and the seconder of the Address in reply were dashed to the ground, how the hopes of hon. gentlemen to my left, which they more sincerely held, were dashed to the ground as well. So little was done, and that reversed by subsequent articles of the budget, that in the end we find the tariff average on our imports to-day higher than it averaged when hon. gentlemen opposite came into power. But hope had not died in the breasts of certain hon. members of this House, and in all sincerity they expressed the conviction that having made a short step on farm implements, very short indeed, in the way of reduction, if that were accepted as a step in the right direction, as the half a loaf that was better than no bread, more would follow to vindicate the measure of confidence of hon. gentlemen on this side in the government of the day.

I wonder if there is any evidence this afternoon that there is going to be more to follow. The customs pledge of a year ago is, apparently, in the minds of the government, wholly fulfilled, and they believe silence the better part of discretion. This year they have forgotten the question of the tariff altogether. So that if the molecular step of last session is a "step in the right direction," I

[Mr. Meighen.]

am afraid the hopes of hon. gentlemen now to my left will not be very high that that step is to be followed by others in the right direction; and, indeed, after the government took this long—promised step, heralded with the language of hope by hon. gentlemen behind them and diagonally across, after that was done and their manipulations with the tariff were over, when we reflect that the government collected \$88,000,000 of customs tax on importation of \$506,000,000, as against a collection of \$78,000,000 on an importation of \$502,000,000 the year before, those who were so ardent for tariff reform in the way of revision downward will hope that this step "in the right direction" will not be repeated very often. A tariff that averaged 15½ per cent up to the end of 1921 for that fiscal year, now averages, when the half loaf is delivered and the sales tax put on at the boundary, 17.5 per cent over the whole scale. Such is the fulfillment of the famous platform of 1919. Such is the end of the comedy on this tariff issue by virtue of which hon. gentlemen opposite sit in power to-day.

I desire to touch on a question or rather a phase of Canadian conditions that demands the earnest attention of every thoughtful citizen at this time. I refer to the general financial and taxation condition of this country. My mind goes back to the days

that immediately followed the conclusion of the late war. The war was scarcely over when the government of the time was importuned by hon. gentlemen then on this side of the House for the reduction of the debt of this country. The war is over, we were told; other countries are retrenching, and that retrenchment is reflected not only in a diminution of expenditure but in a diminution of national obligations. I can well recall the speeches of hon. gentlemen who now sit on the government benches, stating that it was not enough to know that the consolidated revenue was equalling, yes far exceeding, consolidated fund expenditure. That assurance was no solace to hon. gentlemen at all. They wanted the capital expenditure cut down until we could show a reduction of the obligations of this Dominion. At that time the big policies that provided the means of the re-establishment of our returned men were being laid, and their principles were being applied in practice. Our pension scale was growing, our land settlement plans were developing; and our expenditure in these regards was very high. Our soldier re-establishment policies were in full effect, and larger amounts were required in respect of them than were required in the worst days of the war. But