

Ever since we have been in office, for the last fourteen years, it has been our constant endeavour to force Canadian trade in all possible directions and to find an outlet for the energy of our people and for the great and accumulating volume of our business. We have spared no efforts to find new markets and in this I believe we can claim that we have been reasonably successful. But there is at our doors, alongside of us, a nation of nearly a hundred million people to-day, which, man for man, is perhaps the wealthiest to be found on earth, which, man for man, consumes more of the necessities and luxuries of life than any other nation on earth, and which, by deliberate policy, up to the present moment, has refused to have friendly commercial intercourse with us. When my hon. friend tells us that there are only two men who appreciate the boon to this country which will result if a new leaf were turned in the history of these two nations, if the door were to be unlocked, my hon. friend pays us a very great compliment indeed. But rather I would put it in this way; it is not so much a compliment to us as a reflection upon the blindness of the man who can utter such a sentiment as this.

At the present time there are in the United States nearly fifty cities of more than 100,000 population. There are nearly fifty—certainly more than forty-five. Out of these forty-five and more, three alone—New York, Chicago and Philadelphia—have a population almost equal to the population of Canada. Counting those cities of over 100,000, all those under 100,000 and all the towns and villages, you have an enormous urban population that has to be fed. We have the food product in this country; our granaries, our elevators, our warehouses, are groaning under its weight. There is on the other side to-day a powerful party which has risen up in opposition to this policy of exclusion and in the face of all this my hon. friend says to us: Stop, do not allow this food product to be exported to the United States; let it rather rot in our granaries than allow the Americans to have the benefit of it.

Mr. FOSTER. Is my right hon. friend wishing to be understood literally when he makes use of an expression of that kind.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Do I unfairly represent my hon. friend when he stated that there were only two men in this country who would appreciate this change?

Mr. FOSTER. I allude to the last expression of my right hon. friend where I had stated, as he gave this House to understand and would like to give the country to understand, that the grain had better rot in the bins than go to the United States.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Did my hon. friend undertake to speak literally when he

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said that there were only two men who were in favour of reciprocity with the United States?

Mr. FOSTER. I will answer that.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Perhaps there was a little exaggeration on the part of my hon. friend, and if I follow a little of his rhetoric he should not be so tender about it. But, I may say to my hon. friend, when he tells us that there are only two men who are in favour of better commercial intercourse with the United States, that I think there is another one, I think there is a third one and that third one is the Hon. George Eulas Foster, now member for North Toronto in this House and who was once Minister of Finance in the Conservative administration. At that time we had a fiscal system in this country which was known as the National Policy. It is now forgotten, now buried, now as dead as an Egyptian mummy, but in those times which were the days of the glory of the National Policy, my hon. friend pretended to be an admirer of that fiscal policy. He will not deny that, I am sure. In season and out of season he lauded it, extolled it to the skies, but at the same time he was quite willing that it should be so changed that there should be an increase in trade and commerce between Canada and the United States. I am sure that those days have not been forgotten by my hon. friend. He remembers that in 1891, about the month of February, the people were surprised to find that parliament had been dissolved. They were surprised still more to hear the reason why parliament had been dissolved, and the reason was that parliament had been dissolved in order to facilitate negotiations with the United States with the view of obtaining reciprocity of trade. On the 2nd or 3rd of February, 1891, there was an official communication given to the ministerial press of the day in which it was announced that parliament was dissolved and the reasons were given as follows:

In view of the foregoing important statement the question will naturally be asked, what are the reasons which have induced the government to appeal to the country at the present time? It is understood that the Dominion government had, through Her Majesty's government, made certain proposals to the United States for negotiations looking to an extension of her commerce with that country. The proposals have been submitted to the President for his consideration, and the Canadian government is of the opinion that if the negotiations are to result in a treaty, which must be ratified by the parliament of Canada, it is expedient that the government should be able to deal with a parliament fresh from the people rather than with a moribund House.

In order to have the negotiations untrammelled it was advisable that they should deal with a fresh parliament and not with