

of office, 78 per cent. The aggregate foreign trade of Canada increased under the National Policy, from 1878 to 1884, at the rate of 20 per cent, a good start; but from 1884 to 1890, it increased 5 per cent, a decrease of 15 per cent; from 1890 to 1896, 9 per cent, a slight increase; but under the Liberal policy from 1896 to 1902, it increased 77 per cent. You have there the record of both parties in each their fiscal policy.

Mr. SPROULE. Will the hon. minister give the figures from 1902 to 1910?

Mr. LEMIEUX. I have not these figures at hand, but they can be given to my hon. friend, I am sure, during the course of this debate. My hon. friend will understand from the position he occupies in the ranks of his party, that we, on this side of the House, I, at all events, do not object to his criticism of the measure, which is now engaging the attention of the House. The opposition is a necessary part of the machinery of constitutional government. The opposition is bound to watch the affairs of the country, the conduct of the government, the conduct of public business. The opposition, under our constitutional government, is bound to criticise, and it is in the interests of the country that it should criticise. It must find fault with the government. That is the chief occupation of my hon. friend, and I do not blame him for that. I was myself born in opposition. I wished, when I was elected for the first time to the House of Commons, that I had sat a few years where my hon. friend now graces the seat he occupies. But let me remind my hon. friends that our fiscal policy, as this reciprocity agreement with the United States, has always been unjustly criticised by the hon. gentlemen opposite. If they had been satisfied with criticism, I would not object, but they fall into that very bad habit of making predictions. There is no worse thing in public life, than adding a prediction to a criticism. Might I remind my hon. friend of the speech, the very remarkable speech, he made in this House some 10 or 12 years ago, when I was still a young man, when the Yukon railway project was brought before parliament? I never heard such a prediction as the one formulated that fateful afternoon by the hon. member for East Grey (Mr. Sproule). Does he not remember describing Mackenzie & Mann reaping every year in the wilds of the Yukon territory, crops after crops of gold as a result of the arrangement they had made with the Canadian government? If I remind my hon. friend of the predictions he made at that time, it is only to emphasize this fact, that on all great issues, whilst it is the duty of the opposition to criticise and find fault with the policy of the gov-

Mr. LEMIEUX.

ernment, in order to enlighten the minds of the country and to give a little courage to the Conservative party in the country, yet, Sir, the opposition should not venture to predict and to prophesy, because it becomes a very bad piece of business when facts come a few months afterwards to defeat the arguments propounded by the prophets. Speaking only of our fiscal policy, which, in the words of my hon. friend a moment ago, is a monument to this Liberal government, because as he described the condition of affairs in this country, we have good times, we have good markets, and Canada should proceed to work out its own destiny. Does not my hon. friend remember the words spoken by the honoured leader of the opposition when the British preference was introduced in this House by the present Minister of Customs (Mr. Paterson), and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding)? Does he not remember the words spoken by the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster), the financial critic of the opposition? I shall not refer to the old Cumberland war horse, to that great Canadian statesman, Sir Charles Tupper, when he said in the House:

The result is that this tariff goes into operation and the hon. gentleman knows that the industries of this country are already paralyzed in consequence, while honourable members gloat over the destruction of Canadian industries. I was reading the wail, the sorrowful wail, of those industries in the Montreal 'Gazette,' where one manufacturer after another declared that those industries were ruined, that their mills must close, and that they saw staring them in the face a return to the deplorable state of things that existed when the hon. gentleman who last addressed the House was in charge of the fiscal policy of this country. I say that a deeper wrong was never inflicted upon Canada.

These are the words, this was the prediction, made by the leader of the Conservative party in 1897, when the British preferential arrangement was proposed to this House. But, what said the financial critic of the opposition, the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster), then member for either Kings or York? He said:

Is it right, is it fair, is it statesmanlike to allow this young and growing industrial life and development to be hampered and shackled, if not totally destroyed by invoking a competition on the basis of a reduction of duty to the extent of .25 per cent in favour of these countries that may come if the standard is as I have said and we have not a word to the contrary from the government.

The hon. member for Kings then, now for North Toronto, was prophesying that the industries of this young country would be hampered and shackled if that British preference came into existence. The hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. Borden, Halifax), then one of the young members of the House—we were elected the same