

of putting on a preferential duty on foreign products. Is it any wonder that an influential trade journal should have said :

From the day he landed in England until the day he left he seems to have been oblivious to the fact that in his mission he was the representative of all Canada. He seems rather to have imagined that he was sent there for his own self-glorification and in the interest of his party. * * * When he arrived in England he found a large and influential section of the politicians and press full of enthusiasm over the preferential policy of Canada and energetically discussing the corresponding duty of finding some equivalent advantage which Great Britain might confer on Canada, even by so doing it might be necessary to modify the free trade policy of the past fifty years. The complacent Sir Wilfrid, following up his usual policy of conciliation, which means abandonment of claims, relieved the merchants, manufacturers and politicians and the press from all necessity of further discussion by informing them that they were troubling themselves without cause, because Canada neither wished for nor would accept any favours. It is little wonder that he achieved much popularity through such a surrender of Canada's claims.

And again :

We have frequently directed attention to the fact that every trade journal in England entertains the opinion that preferential tariffs on the part of the colonies involve an equivalent preference on the part of Great Britain. During the grand Jubilee celebrations in England it may have been all right and proper that the accomplished and eloquent Premier of Canada should dilate on the loyalty of Canadians, their affection for Her Majesty and their attachment to British institutions. It may have been quite fair that Sir Wilfrid Laurier should claim credit for the fact that Canada granted preferential tariff treatment to England without any stipulation for an equivalent, but it was an act of supreme folly for him to tell the British Government and people that Canada neither hoped nor desired any preference for its products in the markets of the mother country.

It being Six o'clock, the Speaker left the Chair.

After Recess.

Mr. FOSTER. I was going on to prove the motive which the right hon. gentleman who leads the Government (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) had in opposing preferential trade, and any possible offer of preferential trade in Great Britain. I had set it down to the theory, which he himself had expressed not only at Liverpool but at other places, that he was opposed to preferential trade with Great Britain because it involved the placing of preferential duties, and, to that extent, protective duties, by Great Britain upon the goods imported from foreign countries, and that he believed to be inimical to and a violation of free trade doctrines and principles, and that this violation would result to the injury, primarily of Great Britain, secondarily of the colonies. Now I find that the right hon. gentleman

was interviewed by the London "Chronicle," and the interview was published on the 15th June, which was before the conference with Mr. Chamberlain, if I remember rightly, and before the denunciation of the treaties. Amongst other questions put to him by the interviewer was this :

"We have heard of schemes of preferential duties based upon English duties against the foreigners, and we have heard, too, of ideas of Zollverein."

"Zollverein ?—"

—said the right hon. gentleman—

"Well, as I understand it, a Zollverein means, in the very nature of things, protection—a tax upon imports of some kind, and at this moment I would not be prepared to fall in with such a proposal."

Again he said :

"We are quite content with British rule now, and our latest revision of the tariff shows it. No, no, a Zollverein must mean protection, and protection is the greatest of all mistakes. Yes, I am quite convinced of that—quite convinced—protection is the greatest of all mistakes."

"But—"

said the interviewer—

"—the colonies are young, Mr. Laurier," I said jestingly, "and what are weakly infant industries to do without a wall to shelter them from the cold blasts of competition?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Laurier with fine scorn, as if meeting an old and very fraudulent friend, "yes, yes, infant industries? Protection is the greatest mistake even for them."

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"But the idea of a Zollvereinist," I said to Mr. Laurier, "is, of course that England should lead the way. You would not say 'No' if England proposed to tax wheat and meat from the United States, and Russia, and the Argentine while admitting free of duty your Manitoba No. 1 hard wheat, your Alberta ranch beef, and your rosy apples from Annapolis Valley?"

To which Mr. Laurier replied :

"Well, no, perhaps not. If England were willing to give us a preference over other nations, taking our goods on exceptionally favourable terms, I would not object. It would not be for Canada to shut herself out from the advantage. It would be a great boon for the time. But how long would it last? Would it be an advantage in the long run? That is what men who think beyond the passing moment have to ask themselves. Suppose England did such a thing, and abandoned her free trade record. She would inevitably curtail the purchasing power of her people, and do you not think we should suffer from that, we who alone have natural resources enough to feed you millions from our fertile lands? I have too great belief in English common sense to think they will do any such thing. What we have done in the way of tariff preference to England, we have, as I said, done out of gratitude to England, and not because we want her to enter upon the path of protection. We know that the English people will not interfere with the policy of free trade, and we do not desire them to do so. We know that buying more goods from England she will buy more from us, and so develop trade, and the moment trade is developed Canada is benefited."