

RECIPROCITY with the UNITED STATES

SPEECH OF DR. FERGUSON, M. P.,

(WELLAND)

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, MARCH 27TH, 1888.

Mr. FERGUSON (Welland). Mr. Speaker, in resuming the discussion of the question before the House I promise one thing, and that is, that I will be brief. I will not attempt to follow the hon. member for Wellington (Mr. McMullen) in his periphrastics, in search of scandals or of evidence to show that distress prevails in the country. I will merely take up a few of the points and leave the House to judge of the balance. I hope in the few words I have to say that I will be able to avoid anything that has heretofore been gone over in this House, and I think hon. members will agree with me that this is a very difficult task at this particular stage of the debate. I may just say here, as it may be referred to by hon. gentlemen who may follow me, that a meeting in favour of unrestricted reciprocity or commercial union, which means one and the same thing, was held in my county a few days ago. I have looked at the paper, and I find all the men at that meeting whose names were published, with the exception of one, were opponents of mine at the last election, and would continue forever to be opponents of mine. They are an unforgiving people and they remain Grit, and will eternally remain Grit, I suppose. I found, however, one of those Reformers, a strong, substantial and influential one, raised his voice against commercial union, and notwithstanding the fact that that meeting was almost exclusively composed of Reformers, they only carried the motion by a three-fourths majority. I will say, before going further, that in my section of the country, and throughout the Niagara district, we are large growers of fruit of all kinds; and only two years ago I was requested by the Reformers and Conservatives in the counties of Lincoln and Welland to endeavor, if possible, to have further protection placed upon the fruits grown in that district. I may say also that I was petitioned, in 1883, the first Session I sat in this House, to see if an increased duty could not be placed upon oats and coarse grains, in order to protect the people of those counties against the importation of coarse and cheap grains from the western States, brought down by vessels and thrown upon the markets on the Welland Canal. So I am not afraid at this time, or at any other time, to discuss this question.