

Mr. FOSTER. I would not make that statement unless I believed it were true.

Mr. SPEAKER. I understand the hon. gentleman to continue his remarks on his own responsibility.

Mr. FOSTER. I do; I am not taking up time in any sense. I was about to say that this rule is a salutary one, and that if we break away from it, we do not know where we may find ourselves. If the hon. the Finance Minister (Mr. Fielding) or the Government are going, prior to the bringing down of the tariff, to make any intimation to any individual or corporation or industry or interest, which will give that individual or corporation or industry a fair knowledge of what it may have to expect under the tariff, and so give it a chance to run its business in accordance with the coming tariff, the Government is, in the first place, breaking the whole genius and spirit of tariff-making, as we have continued it in this country from confederation up. On the other hand, it is unfair if such hints or intimations be given to one industry and not to others. It is favouritism and most unfair for one to be singled out to receive the information while it is kept from all others. Is it a fact or not that the Finance Minister and the Government have, during nine months, ostensibly and so far as public utterances go, carefully concealed what they proposed to do with any single item of the tariff? There are interests just as great as the coal interests. There are interests which, if they are not as great, yet are just as important to those engaged in them, interests which have been hampered and have suffered heavy money loss because they could not do business on account of not knowing the mind of the Government with regard to the coming tariff. Those industries are scattered all over the country, and I say it is unprecedented and a breaking of that salutary condition I have spoken of, to single out one industry in advance of the tariff and set that industry completely at rest, if not as to the exact amount of duty which shall be levied on their products, at least to give them the minimum duty and to lead them to suppose that, under certain conditions, a higher duty will be placed on their product. My hon. friend beside me spoke about it as a rigging of the stock market. That was not an extravagant expression to use.

The PRIME MINISTER (Mr. Laurier). The hon. gentleman is out of order in referring to a past debate.

Mr. SPEAKER. The hon. gentleman must not refer to a past debate.

Mr. FOSTER. I am very happy to be able to congratulate my hon. friend on having at last taken successfully a small point of order. It has been spoken of as a rigging of the market, and it has that effect

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undoubtedly. Suppose that the intimation had been given six or seven months ago to the pork packers of this country, to the cotton men, to the woollen manufacturers, to the leather producers—to any industry that you choose to name, as to what would be, at least, the minimum of the tariff they might expect, would not the course of business in those industries have been very different from what it has been, and would not those particular industries have been placed upon a very different basis, and would they not have been saved from the loss which has come from these long months of uncertainty and doubt? I think there is no doubt about that. The only safety of the Government is to tell all interests at the same time what they propose to do with them, or else to give no intimation to any interest as to what is to be done. What would the iron makers of Hamilton or New Glasgow not have given to know, nine months ago, whether they could go on with their production, certain that nothing less than a certain amount of protection would meet them when they came to make their after sales. What would not the cotton men have given for similar assurances? So I say that to single out one industry, and that the coal industry, leads us to ask what are the reasons for so doing. What are the circumstances? The Nova Scotia legislature has still a year and a half of its time to run. But it is dissolved hurriedly and the Government goes to the people. On any provincial issue? No, Sir, on no provincial issue whatever. The manifesto issued by the Premier and the leader of the Government party presents simply one issue, and that is the coal duties, upon which, he says, the prosperity of that great industry depends. Is that a proposition that will hold water? Mr. Murray, the provincial Premier, says: I dissolve and go to the people on the issue that I want the Administration at Ottawa to know the mind of this people and that it is in favour of the protection of the coal industry of this province. And before he has got to the people, the Finance Minister makes a speech in the city of Montreal stating on his word as Finance Minister, backed afterwards by a strong member of the Government in another place, backed afterwards by the Finance Minister's own statement here, in the face of his leader and his colleagues intimating that he was authorized to make that statement—that, under certain conditions, which conditions have already been realized, the duty on coal will not be lowered, but that if anything is done, it will be made higher. What becomes, then, of the provincial Premier's issue? Does he believe the Finance Minister? If he does, then the question is settled, and, that being so, why does he want an election in Nova Scotia? Does he not believe the Finance Minister and his Government? That is scarcely credible. What is the only other reason