

neighbours to the South a different policy from that which now prevails and has prevailed for many years past, that we should endeavour to have a larger measure and as large a measure as possible, of reciprocal trade with them. You, gentlemen, take a very different view; and, if I understood you aright, your object would be to impress upon us that we have absolutely nothing to do with our neighbours in that line. The difficulty with the Government will be where to draw the line and to whom to listen,—should we listen to the views we heard here a month ago, or listen to the views we hear on this occasion? The Government think that it is possible—it may be possible—to have some measure of reciprocal trade with our neighbours without injuring the farmers who have asked for it or the manufacturers who are opposed to it. We inaugurated the policy, many years ago, that we would make no more advances to Washington for a measure of reciprocity in trade. You will remember that, many years ago, when the treaty of reciprocity made in 1854, was abolished, many efforts were made by the then Government to obtain a renewal of that treaty. When we ourselves came into office, we made overtures to the American authorities. These overtures were not met with favour, and from that day we said we would make no more; and we did not. But, when we stated that we would make no more overtures, it was not our intention to repel overtures made to us. We received, last Spring, overtures for a new system of reciprocity between these two nations which now occupy the North American continent. While we received those overtures, and while we thought it was not consistent with the best interests of the country that we should refuse them, I may say that when we received them and accepted the invitation to meet our American neighbours with a view to discussing the existing trade relations, we were not oblivious to the fact that the Americans have, in manufacturing interests, quite a start of us, that they have been longer in the business and have a larger population, and that the conditions are not exactly parallel in one country and the other. Messrs. Fielding and Paterson are now in Washington on this mission. And, knowing them as you know them, you can depend upon it that they will not forget, but in these negotiations will have constantly before their minds the fact, that there is no parity between the two nations in their industrial development. At the same time, I cannot, for my part, close my eyes to the fact—and I tell it to you frankly—that I conceive that it is possible to make some arrangement with our neighbours which will not in any way interfere with the manufacturing community. There was in the memorial read by Mr. Russell one statement which caught my attention at the time and which expresses very much the sentiments which guide us at this moment. That statement is as follows:—"And that is why we say to you, Sir, in concluding this expression of our views, that we are opposed at the present juncture to any tariff reductions or treaties of trade that would exercise an unsettling influence upon the prosperous conditions which now obtain." These sentiments I can reciprocate altogether. We are opposed to completing any arrangement which would in any way unsettle "the prosperous conditions which now obtain." There is one thing, I think, in which this Government can take some pride, and that is that we have been very, very careful, even when we had to reform, not to disturb the conditions then prevailing in relation to the manufacturing interests of the country. When we came into office pledged to reform the tariff, in carrying out that reform we were very careful not to disturb the conditions. And I may say that, in my humble judgment, the best reform can be accomplished in such a manner as to do quite as much harm as good. It is, therefore, the part of a good government, while it carries out reforms which are necessary, not to make reforms in such a manner as to bring about revolution but rather to help on evolution. And I think that, if there are two men in the Government—nay, I would say if there are two men in the community—who can be depended upon not to unsettle anything unduly in any tariff arrangements they may make with our American neighbours, those two men are the present Canadian Commissioners, Messrs. Fielding and Paterson. The interests of the community, I think, are safe in their hands; and I think I can appeal to you gentlemen that, in making this statement, I claim nothing but what is fairly due to these two men and to the Government as a whole.