

lines no doubt we would have been equally unsuccessful as others had been in disturbing the objectionable treaties. If we had continued to make speeches on preferential trade, and to pass meaningless resolutions which could accomplish nothing. I have no doubt we should have failed in removing the barriers which stood in our way, and I have no doubt we should have gone on for years without accomplishing any substantial result. Efforts have been made by hon. gentlemen opposite to make it appear that we could have obtained preferential duties in the British markets in return for our concessions, if we demanded such. It has been said by these hon. gentlemen that my right hon. friend the leader of the Government had opportunities when he was in England of receiving what are called better terms from the mother country, and that he failed to take advantage of these opportunities; indeed it is said that he refused offers which it is alleged had been made to him.

I believe, Sir, for my part that every man who has had opportunities of sounding public opinion in England on this subject realizes that there was no ground whatever for expecting such preferential terms as we are told we should have demanded. I do not believe that any intelligent man will say candidly to-day, that there is any probability in the immediate or early future of the British people adopting a policy of preferential trade on the terms mentioned by my hon. friends opposite.

Mr. FRASER (Guysborough). Nor on any terms.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. My hon. friend (Mr. Fraser) says "nor on any terms," but I will not go so far as that. I will however go this far, and I will say that upon the terms which hon. gentlemen opposite talked preferential trade, there is not and never was a ghost of a chance of Great Britain accepting it. I believe that every man who has gone to England and has met public men there, and has met the representatives of the press, and has got down among the masses of the people, must realize the fact that you cannot get the masses of the English people to impose differential duties for the benefit of the colonies. There is a cardinal point in respect to these duties which reaches the masses very quickly. The first step is a movement of preferential trade of that sort must of necessity look towards the imposition of duties on grain; a renewal of what are called in England the old Corn Laws. I ventured to discuss this phase of the subject in my remarks a year ago, and I shall ask the House to bear with me while I read a brief extract from what I then said. These were my opinions then:

This question of preferential trade has been mentioned in the House in times past. Leading public men have advocated preferential trade, but always annexing to their suggestions a demand with which it was well known England

Mr. FIELDING.

could not comply. All the advocates of preferential trade, at all events all who have taken an active part in that movement, have assumed that as the first step, England must consent to put a duty on grain. We know that England does not view that project with favour. We know that no more unpopular project can be offered the English people than to ask them to put a duty on breadstuffs. It may be, as time rolls on, and at an early day, they may change their views. It may be that they may see it in their interest to make this distinction, and they may offer some preferential terms to the grain of Canada. If they can be induced to do that by fair argument, I have no doubt it will be a good thing for Canada. But why should we wait for England to take action? England has dealt generously with us in the past. England has given us a larger degree of liberty perhaps than is possessed by any other country on the face of the earth. She has given us liberty to tax her wares even when she admits our goods free, and we have taxed them to an enormous degree. Why should we wait for England to do more? Somebody must make a move in this matter, and we propose that Canada shall lead the way.

As a gauge of the public sentiment in England I believed that these words were true on the 22nd of April last, and I believe they will be found to be equally true to-day. There was no prospect then; there is no prospect now that the English people will agree to tax their bread to please the Canadian people.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I do not say that such a thing is impossible. On the contrary, I admit it is within the bounds of possibility, though by no means likely to come in the near future.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I venture to say, with the fullest confidence, that if such a policy is to be adopted by the mother country, it will not be brought about by any huckstering policy on the part of Canada, or on the part of any of the colonies making demands of an unreasonable character; but it will come as the result of a grand Imperial sentiment which will override all questions of an economic nature. I repeat, that if such a policy is to come it will come as the fruit of the growth of an Imperial sentiment, and nothing that has occurred in colonial history has done so much to create and develop that sentiment as the very measure which the Parliament of Canada placed on the Statute-books of this country last year.

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

After Recess.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Mr. Speaker, when you left the Chair at six o'clock I had been discussing for a few minutes the question of preferential trade, with some reference to the denunciation of