

Mr. FIELDING. The policy of the Liberal party in tariff matters was proclaimed at the Liberal convention. That policy was to endeavour to reduce the tariff, but with due regard to existing industries, and that policy has been carried out. While the duties on some few articles of luxuries have been increased, those on the great common necessities which the people consume have been subject to serious reductions. I will not weary the House with the details now; I brought down a list showing that in hundreds of items the tariff was reduced. It was reduced so much that the leader of the opposition of that day declared that it would ruin the industries of the country.

Mr. FOSTER. Then you went to work to remodel it?

Mr. FIELDING. No, the tariff of to-day is not materially different from the tariff of 1897.

Mr. FOSTER. Which tariff?

Mr. FIELDING. The hon. gentleman is perhaps thinking of the time when he brought in a second tariff in the same month and when he had not the courage to declare that it was the result of greater study and better knowledge on his part, but said that the changes were all corrections of clerical errors.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. How many items did you change?

Mr. FIELDING. I do not know. If I got greater light and better information I would change every item in the tariff, and I would not blame it on the clerks either; I would take the responsibility myself. If the hon. gentleman goes back to the time when this tariff was introduced into the House and recalls the tale then told by his leader of that day, he will be ashamed any more to say that this government has continued the old National Policy.

Then my hon. friend had something to say about the French treaty, and I do not think he can be very greatly congratulated upon what he did say. He admitted, after he had made some progress in the discussion, that he did not know anything about it. Well, to an ordinary man it would seem that under such conditions it would have been the part of wisdom not to have said anything about it. But then my hon. friend is not an ordinary man; his mind is not an ordinary one. One who could compound the Halifax platitudes can hardly be described as an ordinary man.

Mr. FOSTER. Tell us that story you told down in Halifax.

Mr. FIELDING. So my hon. friend had to be permitted to blunder along and see what capital he could make out of the French treaty before he had any knowledge of its contents, and looking over at my respected friend the Minister of Agriculture he said:

The Minister of Agriculture is a great temperance man; look at what he has done; he has reduced the duties on rum, the duties on gin, the duties on alcohol. When I ventured to say that that was a mistake, that there was no such reduction, even then my hon. friend was not content; at all events, he said, you have reduced the duties on champagne. He was not more successful there, for I was obliged to point out to him that the duties on champagne, as they appear in the French treaty, are the reduced duties as they were established by the old French treaty which was negotiated by Sir Charles Tupper, and which was brought down to this House, somewhat hesitatingly, I must say, by my excellent prohibitionist friend, the member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) who recommended it to the House. Now, the member for North Toronto was more cautious—I will do him the justice to say that. He discussed the general circumstances under which the old treaty was negotiated and the circumstances under which the present treaty has been negotiated, but he refrained, and properly refrained, from saying anything as to the merits of the treaty or its contents. I do not know whether this is a case where one can apply the old quotation as to a certain class of people rushing in where angels fear to tread. Perhaps it would not be proper for me to do so—first, because courtesy would not permit me to call the leader of the opposition a fool, and truth would not permit me to call the hon. member for North Toronto any angel.

Very much has been said from time to time regarding the Liberal platform. My hon. friends have made merry over it, but let me tell them this—and they cannot deny it—that we have a platform which has been carried out to a very much greater extent than political platforms are usually carried out. We have no difficulty in showing how the Liberal platform adopted in 1893 has been largely carried out. But apart from that, let me call attention to the fact that we have had to defend our action as to that platform throughout the country as well as in parliament. We have defended it in two general elections and are quite ready to defend it in a third. Hon. gentlemen opposite have stated again and again that this government has paid no attention to the Liberal platform. Well, we have had to render an account to the people on that point. We did render an account when we went before them in 1900. We then appealed to the people, and the popular verdict was that we had carried out our platform and policy to their entire satisfaction. We went again to the people in 1904; and despite the jeers of hon. gentlemen opposite, again the people said they were satisfied with the manner in which this government had carried out its pledges. And not only were Liberals satisfied, but old time Conservatives came and joined our ranks. There is one thing which