

of the debt besides the \$6,500,000 paid off last year, I think that the claim made for the present tariff that it has been a good revenue-producer is well founded. Therefore an increase in the tariff, an arbitrary advance, is not required for the purpose of raising sufficient revenue. To judge by another, and perhaps equally proper, standard,—the effect of the tariff upon our trade—we find that the tariff of 1897 has been on the whole, a satisfactory tariff. I have already quoted to you the increase of Canada's foreign trade for last year, and have given you the comparison between that and the year 1896, the year before the present tariff came into operation. Since the inception of the present tariff, our trade, as I have said, has well nigh doubled. Surely Sir, the fiscal policy of the present administration, judged by its fruits, is deserving of commendation from the people of this country. It will be hard to convince any reasonable elector that a tariff policy under which our revenue has shown phenomenal increase from year to year, and under which our trade has shown steady and rapid progress, has been a mistaken policy. Were the revenue sagging, were trade at a standstill or declining, there might be some force in the demand for a change in our fiscal policy looking towards an increase in the tariff.

Still, it may well be that, so far as certain branches of industry or manufactures are concerned changes are desirable and proper. I feel sure that, in due time, these cases will have the attention of the government. In seven years' time, conditions necessarily change; and where such changes have occurred they should be noticed and provided for. To my mind, those who are promoting a high-tariff agitation make a great mistake in demanding extreme measures. I do not think that the manufacturing interests of this country are at all a unit in asking for a great and arbitrary advance in the tariff. The overwhelming majority of the manufacturers at the present time are doing well, they are enjoying prosperity and are selling more goods than ever before and at better prices. Moreover, their financial position is greatly improved, and their collection returns have been more satisfactory than ever before. Then, we should not overlook this fact that constant agitation for tariff change, just like constant change itself, is apt to be disturbing, disquieting, and harmful to trade. Sir Edward Grey, the other day, in a speech on the fiscal question in Great Britain, said truly that repose, and not agitation is necessary to the sound development of trade. In the tariff, in my opinion, permanency and stability are to be desired, but careful attention and relief in special cases are not to be denied. That the tariff should be in Canada a political issue, seems, of course an absurdity. And yet we have it so. On the whole, I believe, considering

the geographical situation of the various provinces, our tariff is fairly satisfactory, bearing as it does, not too severely on any one class or section, yet giving reasonable protection to our industries.

During the late recess, the fiscal controversy in Great Britain attracted a good deal of attention in Canada. It did more than that—it attracted to England some of our Canadian public men, who were anxious to enlighten the British elector in his choice of a fiscal policy. Now, we Canadians must always be vitally interested in the trade policy and trade questions of the motherland. Our commerce is affected, our political relations with the old land are vitally concerned. Whether or not our advice to Great Britain in the premises should be given, whether or not that advice can, in good taste, be given, and whether or not that advice, even if volunteered, will be heeded the least bit on the other side of the water, I shall not say. But it still remains that we have much concern with the ultimate outcome of that controversy. To my mind, the attitude of Canada to this great question should be a waiting attitude. As yet, no details of preferential trade propositions have been made known upon which one could offer an intelligent opinion or form a clear conclusion. The programme is yet nebulous. But we can go thus far—we can say that with the idea of closer trade relations with other parts of the empire we greatly sympathize; but we await particulars; formulate your plans and we will discuss them. Our union with the empire in heart and in aspiration is already indissoluble. If we are to be more closely united in trade, we in Canada will maintain the attitude of being willing, at any time to discuss such a proposition with the mother country. Such has been our attitude in the past, such was our attitude in the inter-imperial conference. And it is fitting, in this connection, to remember that Canada was the first to extend, freely and of her own accord, preferential treatment to British trade. It is for the mother country to move first for the adoption of what must be for her a fiscal revolution. Have we something substantial to offer the mother country in return for what may prove a sacrifice on her part? That is a subject for discussion. Our attitude, I say, should be the attitude of waiting, ready, if necessary, to take counsel with the motherland and ready to discuss the furtherance of inter-imperial trade and the strengthening of inter-imperial ties.

But I have already transgressed the limits of the time that I might properly occupy on such an occasion as this. The second last clause in the address I desire to call attention to, and I am sure that my hon. friends on the opposite side will not be annoyed if I should ask their special attention to this clause, which I shall take the liberty of reading: