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THE facts that are being brought to light by the Public Accounts Committee at Ottawa are scarcely less startling than those which Mr. Tarte has been instrumental in disclosing before the Committee on Privileges and Elections. Were the charge against Sir Hector Langevin simply one of incompetency, further evidence would scarcely be needed than that which has been produced in connection with the building of the Langevin Block. What would any business man say to an agent whom he had entrusted with the erection of a costly building, should he find that that agent had made a contract for the construction of the body of the building, with a clause empowering the contractor to impose his own conditions upon any other parties with whom he might afterwards wish to arrange for parts of the work unprovided for—such as roofing, putting in heating apparatus, etc.? If the latter contractors should find it necessary or prefer to use appliances belonging to the former, it would be of course but right that a fair remuneration should be given. But it must be obvious to a tyro in such matters that to compel all subsequent contractors to come to terms with the first, would be simply equivalent to empowering the first to secure all contracts necessary to the completion of the building at his own prices, should he choose to push his advantage. And yet this seems to be exactly the arrangement made by the Minister of Public Works with Mr. Charlebois in regard to the building in question. The case of Mr. Arnoldi, who, in addition to his own liberal salary as mechanical engineer of the Department, obtained considerable sums unlawfully in the names of other parties, is of the same kind as that which the other committee has found to be so much in vogue in the clerical departments. The fact is significant. As it has been attested in every case in which clerks have been shown to have received extra payments by the use of other names, real or fictitious, that the work for which payment was thus irregularly made had been performed, the Deputy Minister and the clerks in question have claimed that there was nothing dishonourable in the transactions, and some writers have seemed disposed to admit the plea. The case of Mr. Arnoldi and that of Hon.

Robert McGreevy, with their steam vessels, for example, show very clearly the natural and, we may say, almost certain developments of such a system. And yet this system seems to have permeated the public departments to an alarming extent. The moral is that the man, be he copying clerk or member of Parliament, who resorts to an unlawful device or subterfuge of this kind, at once places himself on the down grade and forfeits his claim to the confidence of his employer. He can, in fact, no longer be regarded as a perfectly reliable and honourable man, and he has no right to complain if his employer refuse to trust him further. When that employer is conducting his own business, he may do as he pleases. When he is the agent of another, or of the public, he has no alternative, but is bound to avoid the risk.

WHAT is the policy of the Dominion Government in respect to reciprocity? This question must have forced itself upon the mind of everyone who has paid attention to the speeches made by its supporters during the debate on Sir Richard Cartwright's motion. The Government stands virtually pledged to send delegates to Washington in October to confer with representatives of the United States Government with a view to reach, if possible, some agreement looking to freer commercial intercourse between the two countries. Not only is it pledged to such negotiations, but it deemed the matter of such paramount importance as to warrant the premature dissolution of the late Parliament, and the holding of a general election, in order to ascertain the minds of the people, and secure, if possible, their mandate to push forward the negotiations. That mandate they must, in virtue of their majority, reduced though it is, consider themselves to have received. Yet they have thus far during the session given little or no indication of either earnestness or hopefulness in regard to the coming conference. The speeches of their supporters during the debate which closed on Tuesday show a wide divergence of opinion on the subject. Several seem disposed to condemn reciprocity in any form or degree, and argue that even free exchange of natural products would be followed by results injurious if not disastrous to Canadian farmers. These surely cannot favour negotiations of any kind. Another class of orators would approve free exchange of natural products only, which, all must perceive, there is scarcely the remotest possibility of obtaining. A third though seemingly a small class would be prepared to carry the interchange somewhat further. But even these generally interpose the paradoxical condition that nothing be done to interfere with the protective character of the National Policy. One Conservative speaker observed, with obvious point, that the members of the Opposition who profess to be so anxious for the fullest reciprocity would be much more consistent if they were to seek to strengthen instead of weakening the hands of the Government, pending the forthcoming negotiations. But it can hardly be denied that the Government supporters themselves, with few exceptions, have done little to strengthen its hands in the matter by their speeches during the debate. It is true that the want of unanimity is quite as marked in the speeches of the members of the Opposition, many of whom shrunk with illogical dread from the bugbear of commercial union with which they are constantly confronted. But they have always the ready rejoinder that an Opposition is under no obligation to do more than roughly outline its alternative specific, while it is the business of a Government to be clear, definite and comprehensive in its statements of policy. It may be that the leaders of the Government will be more explicit before the close of the session, but up to the present moment it can hardly be denied that they have done little to confute the charge of the Opposition that the plea on which the late Parliament was dissolved and the general election precipitated was little more than a hollow pretence.

THE old truism that "two are needed to make a bargain" suggests the difficulty that may arise if one of the parties should prove unwilling. The difficulty becomes still more serious if there is reason to suspect that both the parties may look with disfavour upon the proposed arrangement. Such a suspicion is forced upon us in con-

nection with the object of the Imperial Trade League, in pursuit of which Colonel Howard Vincent, M.P. for Sheffield, England, is just now visiting Canada. Col. Vincent, if correctly reported, in his Montreal speech said that he wished it to be distinctly and emphatically understood that the League which he represents seeks in no way whatever to interfere in the slightest degree, either now or at any future time, with the fiscal and political independence now enjoyed by the self-governing colonies. The question is to be regarded as one of trade, pure and simple. But so far as we have been able to see, Col. Vincent made no attempt to explain how a colony, Canada for instance, could enter into an agreement to give preferential treatment to British goods in all its tariff arrangements, without to that extent sacrificing at least its fiscal independence. No one can be at the same time bound and free, even in the matter of trading with his neighbour. The point is of some importance seeing that there is no room to doubt that Canada, at the late election, rejected the Liberal policy of unrestricted reciprocity with the United States, mainly on the ground that such a policy would inevitably interfere with its fiscal freedom. Waiving this point, however, we note another of still greater practical importance. Col. Vincent is reported as declaring that there is nothing which the industrial masses of Great Britain desire so much as closer trade relations with the Dominion and with the whole empire. This is a question of fact, and Col. Vincent's statement implies the existence of one of the two conditions to which we have alluded as vital to the success of the scheme he advocates. We can but regret that he did not adduce some proof in support of his assertion or opinion on this point, or that if he did so that part of his speech was not reported. Col. Vincent is certainly a high authority on the subject, and we may have failed to note the change of popular opinion in Great Britain, but we confess that so far have we been from supposing that its industrial masses were desirous of obtaining closer trade relations with the colonies, at the expense of a tax on their bread and meat, that we have hitherto felt persuaded, and that too by the utterances of such men as Lord Salisbury himself, that one of the insuperable obstacles to any such trade arrangement as the United Empire Trade League seeks to effect would be found in the unconquerable aversion of those masses to any such taxation. When Col. Vincent has satisfactorily established the contrary he will have taken a long step in the direction of demonstrating the feasibility of the scheme. But even in that case he would, there is great reason to fear, be met with another obstacle scarcely less formidable in the unwillingness of colonial, or at least of Canadian, manufacturers—who now exert a most powerful influence in our fiscal legislation—to lower the barriers which now protect them from the competition of English manufactured goods.

SO much for the question as one simply of trade between the two countries. But as Col. Vincent evidently foresees—in the case of Great Britain at least—it would be impossible to leave politics out of such a question. Each of the contracting parties would be bound to consider the effects of such a policy upon its relations to other countries and nations. The very existence of the treaties which Col. Vincent so strongly denounces, and which, so long as they are in force, effectually prevent Great Britain from giving preferential terms of trade to her colonies, is very suggestive of the danger to her which would be involved in the abrogation of those treaties and the inauguration of the preferential policy. Though under no treaty obligation, Canada is really, by the force of circumstances beyond her control, under no less heavy bonds in regard to the next door neighbour with whom she now does nearly half her trading in spite of the high parallel tariff walls. Evidently, however, the first real advance towards an Imperial trade league must be made by Great Britain herself, by denouncing and abrogating the treaties referred to. Until some decisive movement has been made in that direction, the discussion can scarcely be kept out of the clouds. How the Colonies can help the Mother Country in this matter, it is not easy to see. We hope we shall not be thought to be inveterately opposed to freer trade arrangements with the Mother Country—which we