

this House, and are not ready here to defend their policy which is being criticised. More particularly is this a grievance when the Government do not seem to have any settled policy on the matter. What did the Prime Minister tell us but yesterday. Here are his words :

The sentiments of my hon. friend the Controller of Customs, who spoke on this subject, are my sentiments.

Well, now, the sentiments of the Controller of Customs as I have read them to the House are entirely different sentiments from those of the Prime Minister. I need not repeat the further remarks of the Prime Minister where he told us that he looked at the tariff of every country in the world from pole to pole, he not only took in the geography, but he studied their conditions and made a careful investigation of all these matters before he made this tariff proposal. I believe it was the duty of the Government to do that before they submitted this measure to the House, but it is quite evident—even if we had not the statement of the Controller of Customs—that they had not done so. When they submitted this resolution to the House on the 24th of April, they should have previously made all the investigations necessary, and prevented the members of this House from taking a leap in the dark. They should have considered the effect of this preferential tariff upon the business of the country; they should have weighed the advantages and disadvantages that would accrue to Canada. They should have studied the interests of Canada, not the interests of other countries, and they should have considered well whether the adoption of it would be beneficial to Canada or not. We are legislating for Canada here; we should consider what is to the welfare of Canada, and not what is to the welfare or advantage of other countries. The Controller of Customs has repeatedly told us, that he does not know what the effect of this preferential tariff is going to be, but as soon as some country makes an application to be admitted under the minimum rate then he will decide. I imagine the desperate position in which such conduct on the part of the Government places this country. They have made an arrangement for the reduction of the tariff in favour of any country which may comply with certain conditions, but the Government cannot tell us what countries to-day comply with these conditions, and the Controller of Customs coolly tells us, that he is ignorant as to what the result will be, and that he does not care to make any inquiry until some country makes a claim, when he will sit down and investigate, and recommend to Council. On the other hand the Premier tells us that all this work has been done already, and thus, we see how unanimous in their sentiments and their views are the members of this Government.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. It may be an evidence of my obtuseness, but I fail to discover that remarkable conflict referred to by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Wallace) between the utterances of the Prime Minister and the utterances of the Controller of Customs. Undoubtedly it did become necessary, at the beginning of this matter, to take a general look at the tariffs of the world, with a view of ascertaining what countries would come under this proposal, and in that general view—which was not a very exhaustive and minute one I do not mind confiding to my hon. friend (Mr. Wallace), and the Prime Minister did not say it was—in that general view, we had no difficulty in discovering that one country came within the arrangement and should receive the benefit immediately. That country was Great Britain. If any other country afterwards claimed the privilege, then, as stated by the Controller of Customs, the justice of the claim of that country will be inquired into. My chief object in rising was to say, that my hon. friend (Mr. Wallace) is not justified in assuming that the absence of the Controller of Customs is intended in the way of discourtesy, nor is it a neglect of duty. I am sure my hon. friend (Mr. Wallace) did not intend his remarks to mean this. I know that the Controller of Customs has been employed every moment of his time in the discharge of urgent duties in connection with his department, and I know that he has been called out of this House two or three times this afternoon by urgent business. True, we may say that a Minister should remain in his seat, but it is not always easy for a Minister to do so. The other night there were complaints from the opposite side of the House about the absence of Ministers from their seats. On that occasion I myself was absent for a few moments, but I was absent at the instance of a gentleman of the Opposition who wished to speak to me on public business. I certainly did not mean any discourtesy to gentlemen on the Opposition benches when I left my seat for that purpose. I can assure the hon. gentleman that the Controller of Customs only left the House because urgent public duties called him away. He was here to-day, and he will be here again before this sitting closes. I would not have the idea go abroad that he has shown the slightest discourtesy to any hon. members, or that he was absent without cause.

Mr. SPROULE. Will the hon. Minister tell us how many and what countries have applied for the advantages of this favoured-nation clause?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Speaking from memory, I think the only formal application has come from the Belgian consul; but I will not be positive.

Mr. SPROULE. Will the Minister be good enough to inform us how the collectors of