

He says the conditions have changed. I am not going to say that a man should never change his mind; but I say that the party leaders, and hon. gentlemen who follow them so tamely, ought always to bear in mind that if there is a change it ought to be sanctioned by decency, reason and consistency; but that is not the case of hon. gentlemen opposite. They change only when they are defeated in their aims. The conditions that have changed are simply the fortunes of hon. gentlemen opposite, and not such as should govern the people of this country in giving their votes. I intend to delay the House only for as short a time as I can; but I intend to call attention to the rule laid down by the Minister of Finance, when he made his first financial statement in the House, and it was this. He took some trouble to read that portion of the Liberal platform adopted at the convention held in the city of Ottawa in 1893, which gave the keynote of the fiscal policy of hon. gentlemen opposite in attempting to deal with the tariff for the first time. It was this:

That the tariff should be so adjusted as to make free or bear as lightly as possible upon the necessities of life, and should be so arranged as to promote freer trade with the whole world, and particularly with Great Britain and the United States.

Now, what was the first rule the hon. gentleman laid down? He proposed to have two tariffs; in fact, a sort of twin tariff. One was, to use the hon. gentleman's own expression, a general tariff, and the other was to be a reciprocal tariff to apply to the whole world; and I wish hon. gentlemen to bear in mind the distinction between the reciprocal tariff as laid down in 1897 and the preferential tariff as we have it to-day. What were to be the virtues of the reciprocal tariff? It was to cure all the evils that had beset the tariff under the national policy. Let me read to the House what the hon. gentleman said with regard to the cardinal principles laid down in both of these tariffs. He said:

We propose to adopt a general tariff, and then we propose to adopt a special tariff having reference to the countries which are desirous of trading with us; and, as a matter of course, not by the express words of the resolution, but by the condition of affairs which exists, that preferential tariff gives preference, above all others, to the products of Great Britain.

Now, Mr. Speaker, having thus stated the guiding principles in the matter, I propose to invite your attention to the general tariff; and in doing so, I wish it to be distinctly understood that, as I have already explained, the duties are considerably higher than we intend they shall be, as applied to countries which are willing to trade with us. And, if as I read the items, hon. gentlemen think that the rate upon any of them is too high, I beg them to believe that before I close I shall have something to say which will show that in respect of our relations with Great Britain and in respect of

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our relations with any other country that is willing to meet us on equal terms, we shall be prepared to offer a measure of tariff reform of the most substantial character, which is not contained in this tariff which I am going to read.

The hon. gentleman explains by saying that there are things that come from foreign countries and which we desire to obtain on fair and reasonable terms, and that desire is paramount to every other consideration in dealing with the tariff. So that the hon. gentleman lays down a general tariff in which there is to be little change, if any, and then he lays down a special tariff in which there is to be considerable change. To make myself clear, he says that in any changes which may be made in the general tariff, they are made only for the purpose of reaching such articles as we must have in this country, and that consideration is paramount to every other. But that, except as regards the articles to which he intended to refer as he proceeded, it is not the intention of the government to make any considerable reduction in the general tariff as applied to countries which do not extend any consideration to us. I challenge hon. gentlemen opposite to show any proposition on their part to make any reductions in the general tariff as a whole. That was to go without any reduction, and any reductions that might afterwards be made were to be made entirely as the result of the application of a special tariff. To use the words of the Minister of Trade and Commerce, these hon. gentlemen made the first flank movement by which we were to have a reciprocal tariff that would apply to the whole world, and then a second flank movement which was a preferential tariff with Great Britain. Their first flank movement was defeated, and they had to fall back on the second, and the preferential tariff with Great Britain was to be the means of correcting all that they had complained of in the tariff of the Liberal-Conservative party. These hon. gentlemen proposed to put an end to combines. By what means? By what was then called a reciprocal tariff. They proposed to put a stop to the robbery of the public treasury; they proposed to kill protection; they proposed to make a revenue tariff; they proposed to equalize taxation; they proposed to tax the luxuries and make the necessities of life free. That was a big contract, and when I call the attention of the House to what these gentlemen, when in opposition, complained of in this House and the country, it will be seen that very drastic remedies were required to enable them to carry out their programme.

I am sorry the hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir Richard Cartwright) is not in his place, for I want to read to the House what he had to say with regard to what this government was bound to do when it came into power: