

have brought about a most deplorable tariff war. Now, in that tariff war, my own judgment is, the United States would have suffered more than Canada, but both parties would have suffered, and suffered in an enormous degree. There is no doubt that large interests in Canada would have been affected immediately. There are some important interests in Canada which are so closely associated with the United States markets that to have those markets suddenly closed against them would be held as a great misfortune. Nevertheless, even the men in these lines of industry, who realize that they, perhaps, would be the first to suffer, were as, a rule, disposed to take the ground that we ought not to make concessions to the United States of the large character they were said to be demanding, and that we should stand firm and insist upon the right of Canada to pursue her own commercial policy. These men were willing to bear the burden if necessary. Every one of these men with whom I had the pleasure of discussing this question personally said: This will be a great disaster; if it be possible by any moderate concession to avert such a disaster, it is the duty of the government and parliament of Canada to adopt that course. That is the spirit in which, then, we have approached the question.

So long as the United States government acted in what may possibly be called an unfriendly spirit—speaking in a commercial sense—so long as they placed their high tariff upon Canadian products and refused all overtures from Canada, the public opinion of Canada was most pronounced that we were bound to resent such a policy, to maintain our honour, our independence. But the moment the United States indicated their willingness to open negotiations, the moment they expressed the desire to come to Canada and discuss the question with us, that moment the government felt—and I am sure parliament will feel—that it was our duty to meet them in the spirit in which they have come to us. Several weeks ago the Secretary of State for the United States, Mr. Knox, informed the British Ambassador at Washington that it was the desire of the United States to open up negotiations with Canada in respect to these important questions, and he desired to know the manner in which these negotiations could be best conducted. The British Ambassador, Mr. Bryce, informed him very properly that the best way to deal with a matter of that kind was to open up direct negotiations with the Canadian government.

Mr. J. A. CURRIE. Will this correspondence be laid on the table?

Mr. FIELDING. I can say to my hon. friend that there is very little correspondence in this matter beyond what I shall submit before the close of my remarks. There have been some few letters, between the ambassador of the British government, the American government and ourselves, which may have to be regarded as of a confidential character. However, I am giving to my hon. friend the substance of it, and there is nothing in it that is not contained in what I have already communicated to the House. It may be necessary, later on, to bring it down; I offer no opinion as to that. The negotiations have been conducted largely without correspondence, and there is very little to be added in the way of correspondence to what I shall submit to the House. But if it be found that there is something beyond, I shall be happy to bring it down.

Mr. SPOULE. Was there not some memoranda made of the negotiations as they went on, so as to keep a record of them?

Mr. FIELDING. It is important to keep a record of the conclusions, but in negotiations between governments in matters of that sort, it is not always necessary to keep records or memoranda of things that occur from day to day. It is important to make records of any conclusions that are reached, and the statement that I shall make will contain all the information that can be desired. But in saying that, if it be found that there is any correspondence having any proper bearing on this question we shall have no objection to bring it down, unless it is found to be of a confidential character.

Mr. J. A. CURRIE. The minister referred to certain correspondence as passing between the British ambassador and the Secretary of State, in which certain matters regarding the tariff are referred to, and I asked the question whether that correspondence will be laid on the table?

Mr. FIELDING. The question is a fair one. The ambassador at Washington and the Secretary of State exchanged brief notes; they were for the moment confidential, but I do not know that any objection could be had to bringing them down. But in all matters of that kind it is necessary that there should be confidential communications, as my hon. friend knows. If these communications are of that confidential character, we could not produce them to the House. I can assure my hon. friend, however, that the statement I shall make will contain the substance of the whole negotiations. As I was saying, the Canadian government were informed that it was the intention of the United States to