

of their time to public service; but it is a wholly different thing for all to retire in a section from the Administration on a point of principle and policy. Now, I hope my honourable friend apprehends that difference; if he does not I should be glad to try at least to emphasize it more.

I was endeavouring a moment ago to indicate to this House that my honourable friend had a reason for placing this amendment in the naked shape in which it appears before Parliament. I intimated that in my judgment it was anything at all but because he was anxious to throw before the electorate of Canada a clear issue for discussion and decision. It was rather because he was intensely anxious to see that no clear issue got before the electors at all. He says that all that it is appropriate to discuss now is whether the Government should be in office or not. Last year he told us that the House should dissolve as well. This year he tells us that we should not discuss the tariff at all, but last year he complained because we had nothing about the tariff in the address. Last year he bewailed the fact that there was no declaration of principle in that address as to the policy of the Government. Let me read what the hon. gentleman said. Reciting one complaint after another in regard to the address that had just been delivered from the Throne, he used these words:

But, Sir, there is a further limitation in the speech from the Throne which serves to reflect the mind of the Government in another particular. The speech discloses an entire absence of any policy on the part of the administration in regard to the economic, social, and political questions which are uppermost in this country at the present time.

Complaining that the Government had not declared in the announcement from the Throne at that time its position in regard to the great economic questions which he declared then divided the country, he proceeded in the next paragraph to complain because, instead of proposing a reduction of duties on foods, we had dared to insert in the address a reference to a solution of the opium problem. He said:

I submit that the people of this country are much more concerned at this time with the question of foods than the question of drugs, and that it would have been much better if the Ministry in advising His Excellency what should be brought before this Parliament for discussion, had propounded some policy which would help to relieve the high cost of living instead of skirting about that great issue and dragging in small affairs such as legislation for regulating the sale of drugs.

[Mr. Meighen.]

It did not seem to be in the mind of the hon. gentleman then that the Government elected in 1917 had no authority to deal with the tariff. If it did not seem to be in his mind that the Government so elected had nothing to do with questions extraneous entirely from the war. Indeed, he complained because no explicit declaration of policy and principle was included in the speech from the Throne; and later in the session, in the debate on the budget, instead of contending then that Parliament had no right at that time to revise the tariff, he complained in his speech that the revision that had been promised had not been brought down before, and urged this House that, pending the completion of the work of the committee which was to investigate tariff matters, pending the completion of that work and the revision that would ensue, the House should then, at the last session, revise the tariff in the manner described in his resolution, that resolution was rather vague, it is true, but which was intended to give the people of the country the impression that there should be a revision right there and then with a view to reducing the cost of foodstuffs and the costs of implements of production and some other things that were vaguely embraced in the resolution he proposed.

Now, will the hon. gentleman tell me how it is that if last session was too late to revise the tariff, this session is too soon? Will he tell me how a Parliament elected in 1917 had power last session to revise the tariff and has not that power now? Will he explain the constitutional principle upon which he distinguishes the one from the other? Will he tell me how it is that, if Parliament last session had revised the tariff, that if the same parliament that sits here now had done what he decided it ought to do and had the right to do, the constitution would have remained inviolate and chaste, whereas, should we dare to touch the tariff now, in so far as even a single article is concerned, the whole thing would go to smash?

I think I can explain the change that has come over the dream of the hon. gentleman. In the last few paragraphs of his speech, he referred to certain by-elections. He referred to some that took place a year ago, some that took place a year and a half ago, and others that took place more recently. He had been contending for a long while that we could not lay any claim to the virtues of the administration of the hon. member for Kings, Nova Scotia (Right