

those important portions of His Majesty's dominions.

I gather that that refers to an entirely distinct meeting from the colonial conference which had been summoned by the right hon. Mr. Chamberlain; and I would like to ask the Prime Minister to state whether or not the expectations which were held out in the speech from the Throne last year have been in any way realized, and whether or not any progress has been made in these important matters as a result of that invitation which was extended by this government to the governments of the other colonies which I have named.

As to the colonial conference which has been held during last summer, that indeed, as my hon. friend from Haldimand has said, was an important gathering. I have examined with some interest the report of that conference which has been issued by the imperial government, and I am a little surprised to find that in respect to 23 subjects and motions which were made before that conference either by representatives of the imperial government or of the colonies, Canada took the initiative in not one. It does seem strange that the representatives of this country, the greatest colony of the empire, should sit supine while these matters were being brought to the attention of the whole world; should not have a single suggestion to make, not one motion to put forward with regard to the very important subjects which were brought to the attention of the empire and of the world at that meeting. I may say that the only motion made by Canada at that conference was a formal vote of thanks to the Right Hon. Mr. Chamberlain at its close, moved by the Prime Minister of Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this conference has a very important place, not only in the history of Canada but of the empire, and I desire to express my regret that it has been so barren of results in regard to matters in which Canada is deeply interested. In the first place, if there is one subject more than another which it was important to discuss at such a conference, it is the question of preferential trade within the empire. We all know the history of that question in this country. We all know that the Conservative party, as far back as 1892, brought a motion forward in this House affirming the advantages of mutual trade preferences between the mother country and the different parts of the empire. We know the stand which my hon. friends opposite took on that occasion, and we know the stand that was subsequently taken by the party of which the right hon. gentleman is and was then leader. In 1896 the right hon. Prime Minister, speaking for his party, or rather the party speaking through him, told the people of this country that they were as much in favour of preferential trade within the empire as was the Conservative party; and the Liberal party at that

time promised to the country, through my right hon. friend, that if they were returned to power they could do as much, and would do every thing that they could to bring about the consummation of that great idea. Well, Sir, what happened? My right hon. friend went to London in 1897, and the government of Canada, speaking through him, told the people of the mother country that Canada did not want any preference in the markets of the mother country. The government is responsible for these utterances, and it is against the government that I now bring this charge. But that is not the last of it. After the Prime Minister had spoken on that occasion, one leading English statesman said that the idea of preferential trade within the empire or of an imperial *zollverein* was to be approached with all the reverence due to a corpse. Another great English statesman said that after Sir Wilfrid Laurier's utterances he would not touch the question even with a pair of tongs. The Minister of Agriculture (Hon. Mr. Fisher), speaking in Great Britain in 1901, repeated the statement made by the Prime Minister in 1897. And last year, when food products were for the first time in many years taxed by the imperial parliament, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was asked whether or not it was proposed to exempt Canada either wholly or partially from the operation of this tax. The gentleman who propounded that inquiry was told by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that Canada was not to be exempted because Canada did not desire any exemption. My hon. friend the Minister of Finance has a record on this also. My hon. friend caused himself to be interviewed on this subject at a time when Sir Charles Tupper was propounding the idea throughout Canada that a preference of this kind might be obtained, to the great advantage of Canada, and that all Canadians should join together for the purpose of bringing it about, if possible; and my hon. friend the Minister of Finance expressed himself in that interview as follows:—

There are three points which Sir Charles Tupper would like to make, but in not one of them is there any foundation for his efforts. He continues to talk about the Conservative party obtaining a tariff preference for Canadian products in England; that is to say that Great Britain would impose duties on foreign foodstuffs while admitting those of Canada free. This is an old cry with Sir Charles Tupper, but no one knows better than he does that it is arrant humbug.

Everybody who has had a correct view of English public opinion has been and is still aware that such tariff legislation in Great Britain for the present or the early future is impossible.

Why, within a few months, or within a year at least, after that, the imperial government had done the very thing which my hon. friend said was arrant humbug; and within eighteen months after that, my hon. friend with his leader in London, was