THE BUDGET SPEECH

Hon. Mr. Fielding Introduces the New Tariff in the House of Commons.

An Eloquent Presentation of the Policy Decided Upon by the Government.

The Finance Minance Minister's Estimate of the Result Likely to Follow.

The following report of the Hon. Mr. Fielding's budget speech is taken from the Ottawa Journal:

The finance minister proceeded first to make his financial statement which he worked out in considerable detail.

He estimated that the revenue for the the present fiscal year (ending June 30 next) to be possibly $37,500,000, perhaps a little less. The expenditure would be about $37,857,779. Mr. Fielding figured that the deficit might be $600,000. But he did not desire to be bound by such a statement. The deficit at any rate would be well within the million mark. "I think," he said, "that we will have to make further allowance for the uncertainties of our trade during the two remaining months and I shall not be far astray if I say we will come out of the year well within a million dollars deficit, and I shall not be surprised if it does not exceed $600,000."

As regards the national debt, he said that for 1895-96 the net addition to the debt had been $5,425,505, bringing the total net debt of Canada to $256,497,432. For the present year, ending June 30 next, the net increase would probably be $1,750,000—say $600,000 of deficit, as he had already explained, and $1,150,000 expended on capital account.

For the coming fiscal year, July 1, 1897, to June 30, 1898, Mr. Fielding estimated that ordinary revenue would be $37,500,000 as far as could be conjectured when the tariff was changing. The ordinary expenditure would be $38,250,000, leaving a deficit of $750,000. In addition, there would be an expenditure of two millions on capital account. So that next year again, $2,750,000 would probably be added to the public debt.

N. P. AND THE LIBERALS.

The Finance Minister Summarizes His Party's Trade Views.

Having discussed the finances at length, Mr. Fielding proceeded to review the history of the National Policy.

Mr. Fielding recalled the inducements which the framers of the National Policy had held out to the people in 1878. One of the commonest arguments used at that time was that protection was not a good thing in itself, but that it was a mater of temporary necessity. Give the infant industries a chance, and they would soon be able to stand alone. That statement might be now viewed in the light of experience. The infant industry had grown larger, and its voice stronger, but that voice was employed to cry out that if the nursing bottle was taken away the infant would die.

Then the people had been promised a a reciprocity treaty. Sir Charles Tupper had promised it in two years. The country had had eighteen years of the National Policy, and had been farther from reciprocity at the end of that time than at the beginning.

Then they had been promised an increase of population. Under this head Mr. Fielding made an exhaustive review of the census figures of 1891, to show that in this regard the National Policy had failed miserably to fulfil the promises of its framers.

Having thus advanced his arguments for the abolition of the National Policy, Mr. Fielding turned to an elucidation of the policy with which the government purposed replacing it. And to this end he read the tariff resolution passed at the Liberal party convention assembled in 1893.

"That the customs tariff of the Dominion should be based, not as it is now, upon the protective principle, but upon the requirements of the public service; that the existing tariff, founded upon an unsound principle, and used, as it has been by the government, as a corrupting agency wherewith to keep themselves in office, has developed monopolies, trusts and combinations; it has decreased the value of farm and other landed property; it has oppressed the masses to the enrichment of the few; it has checked immigration; it has caused a great loss of population; it has impeded commerce; it has discriminated against Great Britain; in these and in many other ways it has occasioned great public and private injury, all of which evils must continue to grow in intensity as long as the present tariff system remains in force."

"We denounce the principle of protection as radically unsound, and unjust to the masses of the people.

"The tariff should be reduced to the needs of honest, economical and efficient government; that it should be so adjusted as to make free, or to bear as lightly as possible upon, the necessaries of life, and should be so arranged as to promote freer trade with the whole world, more particularly with Great Britain and the United States."

Here it was that the Liberals began to show enthusiasm. As each one of the familiar propositions fell from the finance minister's lips the party behind him cried "Hear, hear," and the responses took on the sound of an Anglican church service.

"Here endeth the second lesson," said Mr. Foster.

Mr. Fielding declared that the electors of Canada had given their verdict on this resolution and the Liberal party in power accepted the principle laid down in the resolution as a principle which they were bound to follow. Upon this declaration the Liberals in the house set up a great cheer. It being 0 o'clock the Speaker left the chair.

Resuming in the evening, Mr. Fielding protested against the proposition that the manufacturers had any vested right in the National Policy. Every men who invested a dollar in the National Policy was well aware that that policy was opposed by one of the great parties in the Dominion. There had never been in the country a substantial majority wedded to the principle of high protection. There was a speculative element in the whole National Policy business. The manufacturers had to run their risk and should be prepared to take the consequences. They would have no reason to complain if the government were to remove their protection at the stroke of the pen. That would be stern justice. But there was no disposition on the part of this government to follow such a course.

"Hear, hear," shouted the Conservatives gleefully and "Hear, hear" the ministerialists yelled back fiercely, and the whole house applauded at once by pounding the desk lids.

Protection, continued Mr. Fielding has become so interwoven with other interests that in an attempt to revise tariff conditions the government might injure the other interests which had substantial claims upon it. In the matter of banking alone, vast interests were dependent upon the careful treatment of the conditinos under which the manufacturing industries existed and the government had no desire "by any rash step to do what some persons say we are bound to do but what intelligent persons know we are not bound to do."

"Oh, come to the point," said Mr. Foster sharply, "you are making us tired."

But Mr. Fielding was nearing the point.

A DOUBLE-BLADED TARIFF.

Canada to Uncle Sam and Great Britain—Measure for Measure.

In 1893. Mr. Fielding proceeded, at the time of the Liberal convention in Ottawa, the Democrats had just been returned to power in the United States, and there was every reason to believe that the States were about to adopt a more reasonable tariff policy and enact a measure of tariff reform. The time seemed opportune for the placing on record the willingness of one of the great parties of Canada to assist at the improvement of the trade relations of the two countries. Unhappily the American people had changed their minds. Still, leading public men in the United States had indicated to public men on this side that though the Republicans feel bound to support the Dingley high tariff bill, they do not refuse to enter into improved trade relations with Canada. "In view of that," said Mr. Fielding, "we feel that we are justified in stopping to think what would be the effect of our policy of to-day, while on the eve of negotiations on the subject of reciprocity, if our American friends are willing to negotiate, we should in advance of such negotiations reduce our tariff down to low figures."

"I believe that there is nothing inconsistent with sound free trade principles in a government endeavoring, in dealing with a neighbor to hold in its hands whatever levers it may possess in the negotiations; but not in the spirit of retaliation. There are men, well-meaning men, in Canada—Liberals, some of them, let us admit—who say that we should meet the Dingley bill on the principle of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a dollar for a dollar. We submit it would not be wise to adopt that policy. We say that it is a wiser policy to wait and see what shall be the outcome of the present uncertainty in the United States in relation to their trade policy and of the negotiations which we are willing to enter into with respect to reciprocity. We say that pending such negotiations and pending the settlement of the American tariff question and a clear understanding of what will be the effect which their policy may have upon the affairs of Canada, it is the part of prudence that we should to-day hold our hands and not extend to that country the measure of tariff reform that we would be anxious to extend if they would meet us frankly.

"We recognize the fact that if the Dingley b... becomes law, it will have some effect on our trade. We do not complain of it; we have no right to complain of it. The American people have an undoubted right to frame their tariff policy with a single eye to their own interests, and we must recognize that without a murmur; but they are an intelligent people, and intelligent enough to recognize the fact that if they have the right to frame their policy with a single eye to their own interests, we have the right to frame our policy with a single eye to what we believe to be our interests. Therefore we will say to our American brethren that we will not yield to this spirit of retaliation which is in the air, and for which there is perhaps very considerable justification. While we are not willing to put up a barbed wire fence three or four strands higher, there is no particular reason why we should take it down to-day.

A PREFERENTIAL TARIFF.

"This leads to the conclusion that we must be prepared to deal with this question from the point of view of having one tariff for the countries who are willing to trade with us and a different tariff for the countries who are not. So far as our tariff has relation to those countries who have no particular desire to trade with us, we recognize that there are in it some items of sufficient force to justify us in making reductions not to please foreign countries but to please ourselves. There are things we want to buy from foreign countries and our desire to obtain these things on fair and reasonable terms is paramount to every other consideration in dealing with the tariff question. But with the exception of these articles to which I shall refer as I proceed I have to tell these that it is not the intention of the government to propose any great reduction in the tariff as applied to those countries who are not disposed to trade with us. We propose therefore to have a general tariff and that general tariff will be to a large extent the tariff of to-day—the tariff of to-day, freed from some of its enormities, freed from some of the injustices of which the people complain, freed from many of the specific duties, freed from the conflicts, annoyances, and irritations which have created war between the importers and the customs authorities. We propose to adopt a general tariff, and when 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 product of Great Britain.

At this point the enthusiasm of the ministerialists overleapt all former bounds and the opposition leaders sat smiling grimly at the noise from across the gangway.

FAVORED NATION TREATIES.

Discussion as to Whether They Invalidate the Preferential Tariff.

Sir Charles Tupper asked Mr. Fielding a question:

"In granting the advantages which he has stated he proposed to grant to goods imported from the United Kingdom, how does he propose to get over the Belgian and German treaties which actually prohibit Canada from discriminating in favor of Great Britain against either Belgium or Germany or any of the countries that have 'most favored' nation treatment?"

Mr. Fielding replied: "There is an important distinction between the policy which seems to be forbidden by the Belgian and German treaties and the policy which I submit. By the Belgian and German treaties any colony would be forbidden to make a preferential arrangement with Great Britain without offering the same arrangement to the 'most favored' nations. We do not offer anything to Great Britain by our resolutions that is offered to Great Britain alone. We recognize the fact that Great Britain by her liberal trade policy is in a position to avail herself of this Canadian offer immediately but we make our offer not to Great Britain only but to every nation which is prepared to accept it. We make it to every country which is willing to establish fair and reasonable trade relations with Canada."

Sir Chas. Tupper "The express terms of one of those treaties at all events is that England will not permit any higher rate of duty to be charged upon the articles coming from those countries than is charged upon like articles coming from Great Britain herself. If I am correct in my reading of the treaty, this proposal of the Canadian government is entirely delusive, and will have no effect whatever."

Mr. Fielding—"What I understand—subject to the ultimate judgment of men who know more than I do—with regard to the Belgian and German treaties is that Great Britain will not allow any colony to offer concessions to Great Britain without at the same time offering them to those countries."

Sir Charles Tupper—"Nothing of the kind."

Mr. Fielding—"Well, my hon. friend is willing to settle that question in that airy way which is so delightful—"

Sir Charles Tupper—"The treaty speaks for itself in express terms."

Mr. Fielding—"Possibly it does; and even if it does, the world moves, and possibly the step we are taking to-night may have the effect of drawing the attention of Her Majesty's government and of the English public to the position of those treaties, and opening up the question. Meantime, we intend to take the view that inasmuch as we offer these conditions to other nations, if they do not see fit to accept them, the responsibility rests upon them and not upon Canada."

This statement was received with loud applause.

THE NEW TARIFF.

A Summary of the Principles and Chief Details.

Mr. Fielding proceeded to the details of the new tariff. Roughly speaking, the tariff proved to be reduction or abolition of duties on some agricultural staples like binder twine, barbed wire and machinery; substitution largely of ad valorem duties for specific ones, heavy reduction of duties on iron pig and scrap, with compensation for the producers by bounties; slight reductions of the duties on oil, sugar, wheat, flour and a number of manufactured articles; big increases of duties and excise on liquors and tobaccos, and a scheme of preferential trade with countries favoring us in their duties.

Mr. Fielding was closely followed and frequently questioned by Mr. Foster and other opposition leaders. Corn, he said, which is not much grown by Canadian farmers, but is needed for stock food, was to be free except when imported for use by whisky distillers. The coal oil tax was to be reduced from 6 cts. a gallon to 5 cents and the regulation preventing the sale of coal oil in tanks was to be abolished.

"Sold for one cent," said an opposition member.

Barbed wire and binder twine were to be free after the first of next year. The tea duty was to remain unchanged. The duty on raw sugar was to remain stationary, while the duty on refined sugar, governing the price of sugar to the people, was to be decreased. The duty on uncleaned rice was to be increased from 3-10 to 3-4 of a cent per pound and the duty on the cleaned article to remain.

"You don't cheapen our food," said Mr. Foster.

"No, but we must have some regard for the revenue," said Mr. Fielding.

THE COAL QUESTION.

Mr. Fielding announced that for the present the coal duties would remain unchanged. He admitted that in making his Moutreal declaration he had taken a very exceptional course, and he was not yet prepared to enter fully into the matter. He must submit to some misunderstanding, but he could assure the house that in the end the wisdom of his course would be vindicated. There had existed at Washington certain misunderstandings as to the policy of the Canadian government in respect of the coal duties. His announcement therefore had served a useful purpose.

"Yes, in the Nova Scotia elections," said Charles Tupper.

Having expressed surprise at Sir Charles' courage in referring to Nova Scotia, Mr. Fielding said that there was reason to believe that public men at Washington were reconsidering the proposed coal duty of 75 cents per ton in the Dingley bill, and would probably reduce it. If the U. S. duty were kept at 40 cents per ton, the present rate, the Canadian duty would be reduced to a like figure from its present rate of 60 cents. As the government, however, could not wait to see the outcome at Washington, the matter must be left in abeyance.

In answer to a question by Sir Charles Tupper, Mr. Fielding said that should the Dingley bill duty of 75 cents be imposed by the States, the Canadian duty of 60 cents on bituminous coal would be retained, and a duty on anthracite coal (now free) be imposed by Canada.

Mr. Fielding, who had become very tired-looking, here gave place to Mr. Paterson, the controller of customs, who explained the rest of the items in the general tariff. His first explanation of interest touched the iron schedules. Here though iron was imported largely from the States it was in the interest of Canada that the duties on it be reduced. Accordingly an all round reduction had been made. "The duty has been lowered," said Mr. Paterson, "but we have taken steps to compensate the manufacturers by an increase in bonuses."

Here the opposition groaned again.

THE PREFERENTIAL SCHEME.

Mr. Paterson having finished his reading of the general tariff, of which the details will be found elsewhere, Mr. Fielding resumed his speech. The finance minister proceeded to unfold the preferential tariff scheme. The enacting resolution reads as follows:

"That when the customs tariff of any country admits the products of Canada on terms which, on the whole, are as favorable to Canada as the terms of the Canadian reciprocal tariff herein referred to, are to each of the countries to which it may apply, articles which are the growth, produce or manufactre of such country, when imported directed therefrom may then be imported into Canada at the reduced rates of duty provided in this reciprocal tariff set forth in schedule D."

The finance minister proceeded to say that certain articles would be excepted from the operation of the above, namely liquors, sugar and tobacco. But as to all other dutiable articles, Canada would give a special cut in duties to any nation whose duties on Canadian products were lower than ours on theirs. This cut would be in two stages. The first stage would be a rebate of one-eighth of the ordinary Canadian customs duty on any article and come into effect at once. The second stage would be a cut of one-quarter, to come into effect July 1st, next year.

Mr. Fielding explained that as to the articles excepted, namely "ales, beers, wines, liquors, sugar, molasses, syrups of all kinds, tobacco, cigars and cigarettes," these were items which were large producers of revenue, and it was not desirable that there should be two rates of duty as respects these articles. With the exception of these, the preferential rates would apply to all products of Great Britain and to all the products of any other country willing to put itself on the same trade terms as Great Britain or on terms which would be regarded by the government of Canada as coming within the privileges designed by this resolution.

AGAINST COMBINES.

Mr. Fielding continued: "I have another resolution that I desire to read. The platform from which I read an extract to-night declared that a protective tariff had fostered monopolies, trusts and combines. These combines I am afraid have not wholly been destroyed. I think there are some of them in Canada now; and I propose to give them a certain notice that they may govern themselves accordingly. I propose this resolution:

"That whenever it shall appear to the satisfaction of the government in council that as respects any article of commere there exists any trust, combination, association or agreement of any kind among the manufacturers of such article, or the dealers therein, or in any portion of them, to enhance the price of such article, or in any other way to unduly promote the advantage of such manufacturers or dealers at the expense of the consumers, and that such disadvantage to the consumers is facilitated by the customs duty imposed on a like article when imported, then the government in council shall place such article on the free list, or so reduce the duty on it, as to give to the public the benefits of reasonable competition in such articles."

EFFECT ON THE REVENUE.

The Finance Minister Expects an Increase in Receipts, Not a Decrease.

Mr. Fielding then gave an outline of his expectations regarding the effect of the tariff upon the national revenue.

The reductions in duties, he estimated, would cause the following losses in revenue: On iron, $217,000; on woollens, $275,000; on cottons, $66,000; on corn, $147,000, total a little over $700,000.

On the other hand, the increases in excise and other duties should give the revenue a gain of probably a million dollars, at any rate enough to offset the losses above detailed. The duty at present imposed by the excise law on spirits was $1.75 per proof gallon. He proposed to increase that to $1.90 per proof gallon, which he thought was as much as the thing would stand and yield an increased revenue. This increased excise on home-made spirits should give $500,000; the increased customs duties should give $173,000 more on imported spirits, the increased duty on cigarettes should give $100,000, and there would be a duty of 10 cents a pound on raw leaf tobacco.

Mr. Fielding introduced another resolution to compensate the iron manufacturers by increasing the bounty on steel ingots, puddled bars and pig iron to $3 per ton from $2. This bounty is to be granted only on iron for home consumption, and should any such iron be exported an expart duty equal in amount to that of the bounty is to be imposed.

Mr. Hughes asked if it was the intention of the government to impose an export duty on logs, and Mr. Fielding replied that that matter must stand for the present.

MR. FIELDING'S PERORATION.

His Eloquent Reference to the Policy of Britain Towards Us.

In conclusion Mr. Fielding said: "We present to the house a tariff which has the advantage of being simpler, than the one that now exists, and I feel assured that it will to a considerable extent put an end to that friction that has so long existed between the merchants of the country and the customs houses. We submit a taiff which largely abandons the specific duties which have been so unjust to the poorer classes. We submit a tariff in which the large free list is not practically disturbed, but has larger additions made to it. We give to the country the great boon of free corn, which will have an important effect in the development of our farming interests, and particularly the dairying interest, to which we must look in a very large degree for the prosperity of our farmers and the increase of our exports. We give to the country a reduction of the duty on coal oil, and the removal of the burdensome restrictions respecting the sale of coal oil. We give to the farmer his fence wire at a low rate of duty for the present year, and place it on the free list from the first of January next. We give him his binder-twine on the same terms—a lower rate of duty for the present, and make it free from the first of January next.

"We give the dental and medical profession a boon, which the younger and less wealthy memebers of the profession will appreciate, when we put all surgical and instruments on the free list. We recognize the great mining industry of the country by placing on the free list all machinery exclusively used in mining enterprises. We do not confine it to mining machinery made in Canada, but we say it is more important to develop the mining interests of Canada than even to made a few machines in Canada, and so we put mining machinery, exclusively used for the purpose of mining enterprises, on the free list. We give the people the benefit of reductions on breadstuffs, flour, wheat and cornmeal. We give the manufacturers the benefit of cheaper iron, and much complaint has been made in the past of the burdens imposed upon them by the iron duty. We revise the duties on rice in such a manner that they will not add a cent to the cost and the consumer will add materially to the public revenue. We give the people a reduction almost all along the line. We provide the necessary revenue, but meet the great needs of the country by increased taxes on articles of luxury, such as spirits, tobacco and cigars, and without any increased taxation on the necessaries of life. If hon. gentlemen opposite have ever had the free breakfast table they talk about, we make it freer to-day by reducing the duty on sugar that goes on the breakfast table from $1.14 per hundred pounds to $1, which is a material reduction. And last, but not least, we give to the people the benefits of preferential trade with the mother country.

"This question of preferential trade has been mentioned in the house in times past. Leading public men have advocated preferential trade, but always annexing to their suggestions demands for England's action, with which it was well known England could not comply. All the advocates of preferential trade—at all events, all who have taken an active part in that movement—have assumed that as the first step England must consent to put a duty on corn. We know that England does not view that project with favor. We know that no more unpopular project can be offered the English people than to ask them to put a duty on breadstuffs. It may be as time rolls on, and at an early day, that may change their views. It may be that they may see it in their interest to make this distinction, and they may offer some preferential rate to the grain of Canada. But why should we wait for England to take action? England has dealt generously with us in the past. England has given us a larger degree of liberty perhaps than is possessed by any other country on the face of the earth. She has given us liberty to tax her wares, even when she admits her goods free and we have taxed them to an enormous degree. Why should we wait for England to do more? Somebody must made a move in this matter, and we propose that Canada shall lead the way. (Cheers.) My hon. friend, the leader of the opposition, says that our project of freer trade with England is a delusive one."

Sir Charles Tupper—"Hear, hear."

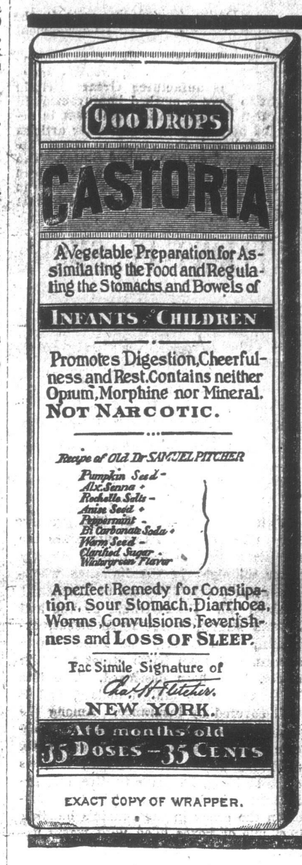
Mr. Fielding—It is so delusive that when I place these resolutions on the table of this house to-night they go into effect, and I speak with pride, in the name of the Liberal party, and the honorable gentlemen around me will share that pride when I say that to-morrow morning, in every custom house from ocean to ocean the doors will open on terms of preferential trade with the mother country. (Ministerial cheers.) I cannot doubt that this tariff will commend itself to this house and country, and when this policy shall have passed its various stages, when it shall have passed into law, then the members of the parliament of Canada may feel that in this glorious year of jubilee they have made a noble contribution to that splendid parliamentary record which Tennyson had in his mind when he pictured the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria as a time

"When statesmen at her council met,
Who knew the season when to take
Occasion by the hand and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet."

With this poetical quotation, Mr. Fielding resumed his seat.

And then the Liberals raised the roof and kept the raising process up for five minutes.

Mr. Foster moved the adjournment of the debate, and Mr. Laurier the adjournment of the house, and after the Speaker had left the chair, the Liberals sang "God Save the Queen" with a fervor something greater even than that with which the Conservatives used to sing it in 1891. The hands of the clock in the chamber stood at mild-night sharp.



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