

opinions about it, has not answered the arguments which he himself used in its favour in Toronto when he spoke of the value it would be to Canada and to the Empire. If nothing else will bring it about, the necessities of the Empire will promote it; and no man, I take it, will to-day deny that the necessities of British trade are very great. What is assisting to change the minds of many men in England on fiscal questions is the extraordinary and unprecedented competition which British trade is receiving at the hands of the very countries which the free traders long ago prophesied would be laid low or would be comparatively unimportant rivals through the adoption of protectionist heresies. I wish to argue with the right hon. gentleman, to win him back, if I can, to the views he expressed and the pledges he gave in June, 1896, to bring him again into the ranks of those who advocate what is an undoubted boon to this country, and what he himself recognizes as such. Look at the changes that have taken place. Peel was an out-and-out protectionist, and a day or two afterwards he was the leader of the movement for the repeal of the Corn Laws, which was his great reform. But I come from Peel at once to the right hon. leader of this Government; for how often has he changed his opinion on that very question? It has been proved in this House that the hon. gentleman was in 1871 an avowed protectionist; and when he excused himself before the Speaker for entertaining those views, on the ground of his extreme youth, he was rather embarrassed, as he will admit, by "Hansard" being produced and proof being given that in 1876 he was also an avowed protectionist; and I want to remind him that in 1879 he used this language, as reported in "Hansard":

He would not be averse to a moderate system of protection to those industries which we had the ability to create, but which required, at the outset, assistance against foreign competition. He knew these views were not held by those who surrounded him, but they were his views.

When the hon. gentleman reached England in 1897, he was a free trader, and he became a member of a club which denounces not only protection, but also denounces reciprocity and fiscal federation as masks for protection. Then, again, how public men can change their opinions. Let him consider that it is not altogether certain that those who oppose preferential trade in England will continue to do so. The hon. gentleman, in 1891, advocated preferential trade with the United States. In 1896 he approved preferential trade with Great Britain. He thus advocated two policies, the one the opposite of the other. And in 1897 Lord Rosebery gave us his opinion of the right hon. gentleman's work in England. I take the following telegraphic summary of his remarks:—

Manchester, Eng., Nov. 2.—Lord Rosebery addressed a large meeting here last evening in con-

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nection with the centenary celebration of the Chamber of Commerce. He reviewed the history of free trade, elaborately eulogizing what he described as its "advantages to England."

Lord Rosebery contended that the condition of agriculture abroad, despite bounties and protection, was little better, and in some cases was worse than in England. He quoted Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Dominion Premier, as "a most illustrious authority, sustaining the view that it is free trade which has preserved and consolidated the British Empire." He fully agreed with Sir Wilfrid Laurier. He declared that any deviation from absolute political and commercial freedom would only weaken the bonds holding the Empire together, and that "anything in the direction of an Imperial Zollverein would weaken the Empire internally, and excite the permanent hostility of the whole world, already seriously excited by British prosperity under free trade."

He said he "would tread softly in the presence of the idea of a Zollverein," for he believed it already dead. It behooved them to walk strongly and warily in the path of the Empire, but such a Zollverein would form a permanent menace of war.

Lord Rosebery, I believe, on that occasion, gave my right hon. friend the palm for having contributed to the death of this project of an Imperial Zollverein.

This brings me to another change of base on the part of my right hon. friend which, I hope, will convince him that because a man argues for or against a certain cause to-day is no reason for believing that the light will not come to him at a later period. In 1893 the hon. member for Simcoe (Mr. McCarthy) forestalled the present Government in their so-called preferential trade policy, and it is interesting to look back for a moment at what the hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce then said concerning the policy which he shortly afterwards attempted to adopt. On that occasion the right hon. leader of the Government read this part of the resolution of the hon. member for North Simcoe:

That the tariff ought to be amended also by a substantial reduction of the customs duties in favour of the United Kingdom, in whose markets all Canadian products are admitted free of duty, and of these nations which, under treaty obligations with Great Britain, would be entitled to the same advantages.

Now, my right hon. friend objected in toto to that clause which I have just read, and yet which is the identical policy governing the administration of the affairs of this country during the last year. He objected to it on several grounds. He was opposed to sentiment having, at any time, anything to do with the control of our fiscal policy, and he said that if the proposition were to carry, sentiment would in this case carry consequences so wide and so large, they would simply prove a weight to Canada. That was a dire prophecy regarding the putting in force of a policy which the hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce (Sir Richard Cartwright) now claims as better than all others. My right hon. friend went on to say: