

made, if not all the reforms that we desired, a very extended tariff reform and one which I am sure the country will appreciate.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. Has appreciated.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Has appreciated, my hon. friend says, and I accept the amendment.

The most striking feature of the tariff policy of last session was the preferential tariff. That policy was designed chiefly to bring about preferential trade with the mother country, and I am sure the House will agree with me when I say that that portion of our tariff policy has been successful beyond measure, and has given Canada a world-wide fame. When I say this I do not forget that my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition, not many days ago, stated that that policy had been a complete failure. I do not know whether my hon. friend wished us to take that remark seriously. But if we are to treat it seriously for a moment, let us consider what grounds he has for that statement. In order that he might give himself some apparent ground, my hon. friend had to create a policy in his own imagination in order that he might have one much easier to attack. He says, addressing the members on this side of the House: "You told the House that you were going to establish preferential trade with the mother country, you said you could do it, you said you would do it, you said you knew all about it, that you had not any doubt about it and you were going to do it; but you did not do it, therefore your policy is a complete failure." That in substance was the statement of my hon. friend not many days ago. Now, what was the attitude of the Government on this question last year? Was it described correctly by my hon. friend? Did we say we knew all about this matter, that we were going to give preferential trade, that there were no doubts and no difficulties, and that we were sure to do it? No, Sir, every fair-minded man knows that that is not a correct description of what occurred in this House.

What we did say was this: That while we knew well that the Belgian and German treaties had for years been regarded as standing in the way of any such arrangement, we felt that the issue respecting these treaties had never been fairly and properly tried out before the British Government; we felt that the moment had arrived when we should challenge the position that was taken on that question, to see if something could not be done to bring about a change for the better. I have stated that we knew that the Belgian and German treaties appeared to stand in the way, but we felt the time had come when we could present the question before Her Majesty's Government in a new form. In the first place, there was room for argument, and we did argue, that inasmuch as

Mr. FIELDING.

the Belgian and German treaties had never been ratified by the Parliament of Canada, or by the legislatures of the province of Canada, or by any particular legislation anywhere, there was fair ground for contending that those treaties could not be made to apply to a self-governing colony like Canada. We had to take the position, in Canada's interest and as the advocates of Canada, that it was our duty to put forward every argument we could put forward in favour of and in support of our claim. We had presented the question to the House in a form not confined to preferential trade with the mother country alone. We presented our proposition to Parliament in the form of an offer to extend preferential trade to such countries as might be willing to extend equal advantages to us. There was a reciprocal condition in the treaty which opened a new question, new at all events as regards Canada and the mother country. There had been no previous proposal on such lines, and therefore we felt there was room for argument, and we were bound to argue, that new conditions that existed enabled us to question whether those treaties would have the effect which hon. gentlemen opposite in this House said they had. We went on to contend, and we did contend, that even if Belgium and Germany were standing in the way, as they had been standing in the way in the past, the new conditions that were imported into the question since the offer was made to other countries, even to Belgium and Germany, if they were prepared to avail themselves of the offer, placed Canada in a position which Her Majesty's Government should consider. We were well aware that these were debatable subjects, that some of them in times past had been the subject of difficulties; we knew there were doubts and difficulties surrounding them; and we further knew that Her Majesty's Government, in dealing with foreign nations, would always be disposed to interpret treaties in a very liberal spirit to the contracting parties; but knowing all these facts, we nevertheless felt that we were bound as the advocates of Canada to put forward every claim which could be put forward in its behalf. That was the position the Government took, and that was the position which my hon. friend the Minister of Marine and Fisheries took in this House, and which he took outside of this House, and as an advocate of Canada he was bound to put forward every claim he could in order to sustain Canadian interests.

In order to show that this was the position we took, that we knew there were doubts, that we did not take the position which hon. gentlemen opposite say we took, I am going to ask the House to bear with me while I read a quotation from my Budget Speech of last year, and I read it because I desire to show that from the beginning the position we took was this, not that there were no doubts, not that the course was clear, but that doubts and diffi-