

parliament and appealed to the country on the reciprocity issue. But the statesmen in the United States, and foremost among them was the late James G. Blaine, took the precaution, for what reason I do not know—of insisting on Canada setting forth what she desired in writing. That same precaution has not been taken this time between Mr. Taft, President of the United States, and Mr. Fielding, the Minister of Finance of Canada. No written agreement was required before the negotiations began. But in those days Mr. Blaine wanted to know what the gentlemen from Canada would propose to the United States; he wanted it in black and white in order that he might know what they would discuss at Washington. And Lord Stanley, our Governor General of that day, wrote to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Knutsford, a series of questions which would be debated by the Canadian representatives with Mr. Blaine and the members of the American executive. The first question they were to debate, according to Sir John Macdonald—because although the letter is signed by His Excellency the Governor General, yet in this country, where we have responsible government, the Governor General speaks only by his Prime Minister and his cabinet—and this letter—the utterance of Sir John Macdonald—was:

The renewal of the reciprocity treaty of 1854, with the modifications required by altered circumstances of both countries and with the extensions by the commission deemed to be in the interest of Canada and the United States.

Then follow some other questions respecting the fisheries, the Alaskan boundary, the coasting laws and other matters. And let me say en passant, that this unrestricted reciprocity policy, which, for my part, I would not advocate to-day—because I have grown older and probably wiser—so appealed to the electorate of this Dominion, that they divided almost evenly at the polls. And remember that we, of the Liberal party, had lost the services of our great leader, Hon. Edward Blake. We were defeated, but only by a very slim majority. After the elections of 1891, if I mistake not, the majority of the Conservative party, then sitting at the right of the Chair, numbered only 19 or 20, having dwindled to that number from 50 or 60. And what appeals were made to the province of Ontario, and to the province of Quebec and other parts of the country! It was during the last phases of Sir John Macdonald's brilliant career, his last appeal to the electors,—a British subject he was born, a British subject he would die! The right hon. gentleman (Sir Wilfrid Laurier), who now leads this House had only been selected as leader of the Liberal party a few years before, in 1888 or 1889. He was not then so well known in

the country as he is to-day. And he belonged to the minority. Yet, Sir, in the great province of Ontario, the majority for Sir John Macdonald in the elections of 1891, was not more than half a baker's dozen. And the province of Quebec we carried by a majority of 15. We lost in all the other provinces, except, I believe, Prince Edward Island. All this to show you that, now that we are not asking to commit this country to unrestricted reciprocity with the United States, but have receded to the sounder policy of restricted reciprocity, if parliament were dissolved, and an appeal made to the electorate of the Dominion, I have no hesitation in saying, the Liberal party would again carry the country. At all events, the policy of the Liberal party in 1891, for the many causes I have mentioned, was defeated by the electors. But, Sir, the Liberal party, in 1893, again raised the flag of reciprocity.

Mr. WRIGHT. Before the hon. gentleman leaves the elections of 1891, let me point out several points in which he has not stated the facts with accuracy. He says that in 1891 the Liberals carried the province of Quebec by a majority of 15. Quebec only gave them 5. And he is wrong also with regard to the general result.

Mr. LEMIEUX. All I know is, that the party of my hon. friend (Mr. Wright), came back to office with a largely reduced majority. And we must thank the electorate for having postponed the final victory of the Liberal party. If the Liberal party had come into power in 1891—and we were very near reaching the coveted goal—we should have inherited the effects of the National Policy; we would have been held responsible of the Black Fridays; and, no doubt, in 1896, the electorate would have done for us what they did for our opponents.

Mr. MIDDLEBRO. Had the Liberals come into power, would they have carried out the policy of unrestricted reciprocity, which the hon. gentleman (Mr. Lemieux), has just said he is sorry for having advocated?

Mr. LEMIEUX. My hon. friend (Mr. Middlebro), is a lawyer, I believe. As a lawyer, he knows that the witness cannot answer a hypothetical question, especially when it refers to past events. Let bygones be bygones. But in 1893 at the Liberal convention in Ottawa, the Liberal party once more raised the flag of reciprocity—restricted reciprocity—with the United States. We Liberals generally bow to the wishes of the electors. In the platform laid down at that convention appears the following: