

ties of the country divide upon some vital issue which affect not the present but the future interests of the people. To-day the people of Canada stand face to face with such an issue, and the next contest is to be one between free trade and protection.

Now my hon. friend the Secretary of State, when he shook his head in dissent a few minutes ago, could not fairly make that dissent apply to utterances of his party in the part of Canada to which I belong :

What are the policies of the two parties? The government say to you we will give you tariff reform, but it must be on the lines of the protective tariff. Whatever else we may change that principle must be preserved sacred and intact. We will reform the tariff. We will change the incidence of the duties, but will never consent that the old policy be given up, modified or changed. The policy of the Liberal party on the contrary is the reform of the tariff by the elimination from it of every vestige of protection.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—He continued :

In our convention platform we denounced the protective system as unfair, unjust and burdensome. We arraigned it for being the author of many of the evils under which Canada is suffering to-day. We charged it as being largely accountable for the frightful exodus of our population, which is the dismay of our more thoughtful minds. We say that to it may be credited in a large measure the depreciation of the value of real estate throughout this country. We say the stagnation of trade, the hard times which are felt everywhere can fairly be attributed in a large measure to this policy and we demand its elimination from our tariff and the return to those old free trade privileges under which Canada was brought up and for so many years prospered.

And I may quote a speech of Sir Richard Cartwright to the same effect, and also another speech by Mr. Davies in 1893, when he said this system of protection was "a cursed system," and when Mr. Foster checked him for cursing he said, "Yes, cursed by God and man." What do we find to-day? We find the hon. Premier of Canada, speaking at St. Johns, declaring that his Finance Minister will go over the country, and consult the manufacturers and all other classes of people, in order, as it says in the speech, that no injury will be done to anybody in the formation of the tariff, which means, in other words, that the protective principle is still going to be recognized in the re-framing of the tariff. If these words do not mean that, I am not able to understand plain English. Now, if

the principle of a revenue tariff is going to be applied, why delay a couple of months in order to bring about that result? As I said before, it is not necessary, if that is the principle to be followed, to go round consulting anybody. The only great objects to be considered are the burdens that it is proposed to be imposed on the tax-payers, and the productiveness of the tax. These are the only two considerations, and I cannot see why it would be necessary for the Finance Minister to make excursions through the country and take up his time consulting manufacturers or any other class, if it is proposed to adopt a revenue tariff. And why this delay? If we are right in understanding the government to adopt the revenue tariff, why this delay? I admit, if a protective tariff is going to be formed, if we are going to have the tariff changed, but the principle of protection is to be retained, of course, it is necessary to proceed with care, and consult the manufacturers and agriculturists, and other classes of the people; but if revenue requirements is to be the sole and entire consideration, there is no necessity for this delay. The tariff might be submitted to us, and the changes brought about during this session. I say that the delay is unnecessary, and we admit cheerfully and freely that all delays of this kind are injurious. We admit that the delay in the readjustment of the tariff some years ago by the late government did work injuriously, but owing to the principle on which the tariff was proposed to be adjusted, maintaining the protective system, it was impossible that it should be done in a hurry. As the protective principle was to be recognized, the manufacturing interests had to be consulted and great care had to be taken, but in the present instance, if the protective principle is not going to be recognized, I submit that the tariff should be dealt with at once, and this delay, which is so injurious to the country, should be prevented. Now I will show hon. gentlemen what eminent authorities of the Liberal party thought of this delay in 1893, and what they thought of sending round the Finance Minister to consult the different industries of the country. Sir Richard Cartwright said then :

Over and above all the hon. gentleman has been good enough to say that a grand progress is to be instituted. Is it to be by caravan or Jamaica car, Mr. Speaker? Four Cabinet Ministers, no, two