

expenditure); the succeeding year \$1,750,000; and then he comes down for 1896 to \$1,250,000.

There is no mistake as to the cause; no mistake as to the reason, but it may interest the House to know what the practical results of this misplaced and false economy are. Everybody knows that we have in Canada a great number of public works, particularly on our various sea coasts, which require constant attention to keep them in a proper state of repair; and if the Minister, for a political reason, chooses deliberately to starve the public works in any particular year, he runs the risk (which my hon. friend has found to be more than a risk, to be a very serious fact for him), he runs the risk for the sake of saving a few thousands or a few hundreds of dollars in one year; of unnecessarily incurring the expenditure of many hundreds of thousands of dollars in the succeeding year or two.

Sir, I lay stress upon that because the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) laid great stress upon it. I wholly deny his right to treat the expenditure for 1896 as a true and fair statement of the average annual expenditure to which the Dominion had attained, and I hold him responsible—for reasons I have given before—not merely for his main estimates, but for the supplementary estimates, part of which were indeed rendered necessary by the false economy of 1896, and a large part of which were brought down and placed in the hands of members all over the country for the purpose of enabling them to say, that the Government of the day had placed large sums in the supplementary estimates for the benefit of particular constituencies, and that they were only prevented from giving full effect to their good intentions, by the obstinacy of hon. gentlemen now on this side of the House.

The hon. gentleman likewise entered into a long calculation, with which I have not the slightest intention of wearying the House, as to the average additions to the debt, and he dwelt upon the iniquity of my hon. friend the Minister of Railways and Canals (Mr. Blair) in demanding nearly twice as much as he did. For what purpose has my hon. friend been demanding these large sums? For the purpose, and no other, of fulfilling obligations which the late Government had entered into, and left unfulfilled in our hands. For the purpose, and no other, of completing works which they had commenced, which are in process of construction, and which could not possibly be suspended. What is the crime of my hon. friend whom he specially denounced as a dangerous person? The crime of my hon. friend is that, instead of dawdling over the work for ten years more, as would have been done by hon. gentlemen opposite if they had remained in power, he proposes to complete the canal system in two years, and to give to Canada and the North-west

and this continent, a magnificent system of internal navigation which will make the rest of the money that has been expended a source of real profit to the people of Canada. It is for the purpose of carrying out that sound, judicious and genuinely economical policy, that my hon. friend has to ask for four or five millions instead of the two millions or thereabouts which the hon. gentleman expended in his time.

Sir, the hon. gentleman was good enough to quote the language which I have heretofore used on the subject of protection. I stick to every word of it. I am not ashamed to stand up in this House and say that I hold protection to have been a curse to this country. I have said so before, and I say so now; and I have to add, what I have stated in my place before, that I am prepared to take any lawful and honourable means of extirpating protection. I am not going to be too particular whether we do it by a revenue tariff, a reciprocity treaty, or by a substantial preferential treatment to the mother country. It may be an interesting bit of history for the hon. leader of the Opposition to know that when this tariff has attained its full maturity, when it is fully developed—if you make allowance for the special reservations which we have made for the purpose of enabling us to treat on fair terms with our American friends, and if you bear in mind the slightly important fact that we have to provide about \$40,000,000, instead of \$24,000,000, as in 1878—I break no seal of official secrecy when I say that this tariff, when it will emerge, will be to a very great extent,—in fact, substantially—on lines which it is perfectly well known I was prepared to recommend to the Cabinet of the late Hon. Alexander Mackenzie in 1876; and that certain political exigencies—to the great injury, I believe, of the country as well as the Reform party—prevented my then intentions being carried into effect.

Now, I come to a vastly more important matter than any of what I must call the hon. gentleman's somewhat picayune criticisms of my hon. friend the Minister of Railways and Canals. The hon. gentleman could not rise to the situation. He found it necessary to criticise very severely the offer we have made to grant to those governments who treat with us on fair terms a large reduction in the taxation schedule. Now, Sir, I am not going to speak dogmatically or ex cathedra on this subject. I recognize fully that this is a complicated question. We have to deal, if not with a mixed issue of law and fact, at any rate with a mixed issue of law and public policy. I know that jurists and statesmen of the highest repute have differed, and differed very widely, as to the interpretation that is to be put on the most-favoured-nation clause when dealt with on the basis of reciprocity; and, unless my memory is at fault, I think that in the course of the