

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—It does, if any basis was suggested; but no basis was suggested.

Hon. Mr. BOULTON—But was it a protective basis or a free trade basis?

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—Why ask that question? Have I not already said there was no basis suggested? The premier had said, and he reiterated it the other day, and it was stated by the *Globe* that the proposition of Mr. Chamberlain was free trade, pure and simple, between England and her colonies; and then he asked this question: Are you prepared, said the premier, to adopt that policy? The answer is that the *London Times* took exception to that statement. The *London Times* said, in reviewing the article that was in the *Globe*, that Mr. Chamberlain was a sensible man, and he would never make such a proposition, and we have no evidence that he did make such a proposition. On the contrary, the record shows what Mr. Chamberlain proposed at that conference, and he makes no such proposition there. When asked the other day what took place at that conference, the premier said his lips were sealed, because he was not permitted to give to the public the proceedings of that conference. May we not naturally ask, how it is that the *Globe* got possession of that information unless it was given for the purpose of the election at that moment, or concocted by the writer? If the premier took upon himself the responsibility of informing the *Globe's* editorial writer that such a proposition was made, then his mouth should be open to tell this country the whole of the proceedings that took place in reference to that conference; otherwise it is a gross breach of faith on the part of the premier to those who formed that conference. Every man who reflects will come to the conclusion, that he made the grievous mistake of his life when he took the position that he did in his first speech in Liverpool, reiterated through the whole of England wherever he had an opportunity of speaking. Any one who has watched current events and has followed the policy which Mr. Chamberlain has carried out ever since he has been in office, knows that it has been one having for its object the unity of the empire and was prepared to fight our battle with the people of England upon this very question.

And had it not been for Sir Wilfrid Laurier's declarations, backed by those of the premier of New South Wales, I doubt not we should be rapidly on the road towards receiving something like a preference in the market of England, such a preference as was indicated by the Hon. Wilfrid Laurier in his speech in London before he left for England, when he declared in the strongest possible language that he was in favour of preferential trade, that every man in Canada was in favour of a preference in the English market; and then he said this: If we had a preference in the English market for our wheat and meat and cheese, of what inestimable value it would be for the commerce of this country.

Hon. Mr. MILLS—Does the hon. member say Mr. Chamberlain was ready to give us preferential trade?

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—Well, I must say this, that question is very much like drawing a herring across the trail. It has nothing to do whatever with the point I was making. What I say is, Mr. Chamberlain's whole policy has been that of colonial preference, and he stated himself that, after the declaration of Mr. Laurier, he would not touch the question with a pair of tongs, that it was hard enough to fight the free traders of England on that question, even with the approval and consent of the whole of the colonies at his back; but they, having deserted him, and saying they did not want it, he was not going to run his head against a stone wall. That was the position of Mr. Chamberlain, and no one knows better than my hon. friend opposite (Mr. Mills) that Mr. Chamberlain's whole policy has been more liberal towards the colonies than that of any colonial minister that has existed in his and my day: that he has done everything he possibly could to cement the union between the different parts of the empire. Preferential trade was one of the grandest schemes that could possibly have been devised; and I believe that the people of England were beginning to realize that fact, but when Lord Rosebery said, in view of what had taken place and what had been uttered by the two premiers of the two premier provinces, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Mr. Reed, the question was out of the range of practical politics at the present day. And so it is. But what