

Policy was introduced. We have not said that if there be any necessity for it, if there be any argument for its continuance it must be that it is powerful enough to keep off depression from a country, powerful enough to ward off these cycles of depression which sweep over the whole world, no matter what fiscal system, no matter what system of government may be adopted. No, Sir, that is an extreme statement which Liberal-Conservatives do not make. But what they do state and that in which their position is impregnable according to sound reasoning and good theory, impregnable according to the experience of this country and other countries, is this, that the National Policy—bringing it down to this particular country—has moderated the force and effect of cycles of depression, and has kept this country steady, and has kept it strong in the midst of four years of commercial depression deeper and more far-reaching in its consequences, and causing a wider and deeper distress than any other period of depression for the last twenty-five years in the history of the commercial nations of the world. That is what we stand upon, that is what we are willing to be judged by as to the effects of the National Policy. I am not going to make a speech upon the budget; I am not going to discuss the trade question within the narrow limits of time that is allowed me upon the Address. But when we come to that question we shall have ample time to contrast ourselves with other countries. Let me just now give to my hon. friend a text which he may think about, one upon which he may be called upon to say something when the discussion comes on. If his policy is, as he says, free trade as it is practised and as it exists in Great Britain, when he denounces the National Policy here, because he declares that it does not ward off but induces depression, we shall ask him, by and by for a satisfactory explanation of his assertions and ask him to point out why it is that in the greatest and almost the only free trade country, our own mother country, Great Britain, there is to-day, and has been for the last four or five years a series of depressions in agriculture hitherto unknown in the history of that island, and which have brought about a state of affairs which is exercising more serious thought among the statesmen and economists of Great Britain than any other question which is to-day pressing for solution there. That is a question of practical politics which it will be incumbent upon my hon. friend to make very clear to the House and the country before he can get either the House or the country to believe that free trade as it is in England is a better system for Canada than that we have adopted. The hon. gentlemen made merry over a prediction which had been made by Sir Charles Tupper in this House with re-

Mr. FOSTER.

ference to what was to take place in the future as to the development of the North-west, and the settlement of its fertile lands. Now, if the hon. gentleman will read the letter he will find that it was not a prediction of a Minister, or of Sir Charles Tupper, but a statement drawn up in cool blood by a departmental officer without political bias, to say the least, who, from the data that he had in hand at that time made up what he thought would be the line of development in the North-west within the next few years. That was a statement which a Minister is bound to take, and is bound to give his adhesion to unless—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh.

Mr. FOSTER. Wait until I get through. That is a statement which a Minister is bound to take, and is bound to give his confidence to unless he has the best of ground for believing that the departmental officer is biased or is mistaken in his opinions. But, Sir, that was a statement made up by a departmental officer, made up without bias, made up under circumstances which, at the time, he thought predicted the result, and I am bound to say that he made it up in full faith that the next few years would realize the truth of his statement. The result was different. But there are statements made by hon. gentlemen opposite that might be criticised in the same way, statements made by them upon their own responsibility. Let us examine one of these. I remember that my hon. friend (Mr. Laurier) in 1883, I think it was, speaking in this House in opposition to a loan which was proposed to be given to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company of \$30,000,000, opposed it on the ground that it was not a loan in reality but a gift. And he made this oracular prediction, that he was as likely to see the waters run up hill as to see one dollar of that \$30,000,000 recouped to the Dominion treasury. Now, this was a statement made, not by a departmental officer, but made by the hon. gentleman himself, and testing his own powers of prediction. And it failed. Having fallen into error himself he ought to be wondrous kind in the case of an error in prediction made upon far better grounds, by a political opponent. I remember later than that, when the hon. gentleman, the political leader of his party, supposed to give them the word of faith and guidance, which they were to follow with implicit obedience, looking over the whole political field, studying the whole economic problem, looking at the state of agitation and the state of opinion in the republic to the south of us, came here, and went through this country, and made the prediction without any ifs, or buts, or qualifications, that the United States, the first born daughter of England, had pronounced for, and would speedily realize, free trade; and the next daughter of