

Now, Sir, the hon. gentleman made a speech at St. John's, Quebec, which does not materially differ from that delivered by His Excellency; and in that speech he said:

We do not intend to introduce any important legislation. The consideration of tariff changes will be adjourned until the session of January or February, and from now until that time my colleague, Mr. Fielding, will interview the different business men in the country, and will prepare a tariff which will be of a nature to satisfy all established industries, and to lighten the burden of taxation.

Protection is not at present to be torn up root and branch; the industries which have grown up under the policy of the last 18 years are not to be ruthlessly destroyed; but the hon. Minister of Finance is to interview the business men of the country and ascertain what tariff can be adopted that will, as Mr. Madore has said, improve the condition of the manufacturers rather than destroy their industries. I do not intend to pursue that matter further than to say that, regarding as I do the absolute necessity of maintaining protection to the industries of Canada in order to insure the progress and prosperity of the country, far from expressing any regret at the changed views and sentiments of the hon. First Minister, which undoubtedly represent the policy of the party, I congratulate the hon. gentleman most heartily and most warmly upon the enlightened views which he has at last been able to adopt, and upon the safety and security which the industries of this country will enjoy in consequence of that change. But I maintain, as I said before, that on that issue the hon. gentleman has not gone to the country; and I do not hesitate to say that if he had gone to the country upon that issue as it had been presented down to a recent period, and as it was indicated by the speeches of the hon. member for Queen's, P.E.I., and the hon. member for South Oxford—had he gone to the country upon that issue, unconnected with that unfortunate question which was interposed, and which produced such a striking and marked effect upon the result of the recent election, the hon. gentleman, instead of sitting where he now sits, would be sitting here. In my judgment, it is impossible to see this change of base in the presence of the electors of Canada without arriving at the conclusion that hon. gentlemen opposite, whatever they may think of the wisdom or the unwisdom of the policy of protection, know that it is deeply seated in the minds and feelings of the great body of the electors of this country; and their opposition to that policy would have secured their defeat just as it had done on the four previous occasions when it was submitted to the country.

But, Sir, there was another question, and one of very great importance, which was submitted as an issue in the election, and I will briefly draw the attention of hon. gen-

tleman to that question. That was the question of remedial legislation. The House is perfectly well aware that the Government of my predecessor, Sir Mackenzie Bowell, had adopted the policy of remedial legislation. They had adopted the policy of accepting the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Queen's Privy Council as throwing upon them the duty of introducing into this Parliament the means of restoring the privileges that had been taken away by the Act of 1890 from the French Catholic minority in Manitoba. Hon. gentlemen are perfectly well aware that when I was invited to become the leader of the party in the House of Commons, I placed before the House that question as one of the very gravest possible importance; and believing, as I did, that it involved very grave and important consequences, and that the duty was undoubtedly thrown upon the Government of the day of sustaining the position taken by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England, I did not hesitate to stake the life of the Government upon that policy. I need not detain the House further than to say that when the Bill was introduced for the purpose of giving effect to that policy, the hon. First Minister moved the six months' hoist, and took his stand—as firmly, as distinctly and as unequivocally as any hon. gentleman ever took a position, in my judgment—upon the unwisdom of interfering with the autonomy of the province of Manitoba. He took the position of maintaining that, as the majority of the people of Manitoba and of the representatives of Manitoba had taken away those privileges, they must not be restored by an Act of this Parliament, but that conciliation must be used, and in fact the majority must be induced to modify their views in such a way as to restore the privileges of which the minority had been deprived. That was the position taken by the hon. gentleman here and was also that taken by him in the province of Ontario, as I shall show the House. On the 12th June, 1896, the "Globe" newspaper reports the hon. First Minister as having said:

He (Mr. Laurier) desired to secure the sentiment, not of his own people of Quebec but of the English-speaking people of Ontario. (Cheers). He was there to say not that he would give either a small or large amount of relief to the minority, but that, assisted by his friend, Sir Oliver Mowat, he would settle the question, not by appeal to any class, but by appeal to the sense of justice which was implanted in every one by the Creator. He was a Roman Catholic, and a French Canadian, and therefore might have strong sympathy for the minority. But as he himself would not be coerced by anybody, so he would not consent to force coercion upon anybody.

Can any language be clearer or stronger than this emphatic declaration by the First Minister that he would not resort to an Act of Parliament of the Dominion to override the majority of the legislature of Manitoba.