

arrived in England he found a large and influential section of the politicians and press full of enthusiasm over the preferential policy of Canada, and energetically discussing the corresponding duty of finding some equivalent advantage which Great Britain might confer on Canada, even if by so doing it might be necessary to modify the free trade policy of the past fifty years.

That is what the *Trades Journal* said was the condition of things there. A large and important section of the politicians and press of the country were looking round to see how they could meet Canada in the matter of preferential trade. The article continues :

• The complacent Sir Wilfrid following up his usual policy of conciliation which means abandonment of claims, relieved the merchants, manufacturers and politicians with the press from all necessity of further discussion, by informing them that they were troubling themselves without cause, because Canada neither wished for, nor would accept any favours. It is little wonder that he achieved much popularity through such a surrender of Canada's claims. It may have been quite fair that Sir Wilfrid Laurier should claim credit for the fact that Canada granted preferential tariff treatment to England without any stipulation for an equivalent, but it was an act of supreme folly for him to tell the British government and people that Canada neither hoped nor desired any preference for its products on the markets of the mother country.

That is what the *Trades Journal* said and no political opponent of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in Canada could put the case more emphatically than this commercial organ of Great Britain put it. Now, I noticed that my hon. friend the senior member from Halifax, who was speaking a moment ago, read an article from the *Toronto Globe* which purported to find an excuse for Sir Wilfrid in going back on his professions during his stay in England. I was surprised to find my hon. friend reading this extract from the *Globe* :

Conservative newspapers keep up a constant fire of criticism on Sir Wilfrid Laurier because as they allege he refused to agree to a preferential tariff between Britain and Canada as proposed by Mr. Chamberlain. It is just as well that the real faults of the nation should be known. During the visit of colonial premiers to England, Mr. Chamberlain made the proposition that there should be absolute free trade between Great Britain and her colonies, on condition that Britain placed a small customs tax on commodities from foreign countries.

I have read you from Mr. Chamberlain's speech in opening the Chamber of Commerce. I have also in my possession a copy of the remarks that were put before the conference of colonial premiers when they met in June last in London by that hon. gentleman, and I fail to find that there is one iota of truth in this declaration of the *Toronto Globe* which my hon. friend read to

the House. It cannot be found in these documents that Mr. Chamberlain laid down any such proposition. On the contrary in the Chamber of Commerce meeting he laid down the very opposite of it, for that is one of the two proposals which he said was practically impossible to expect Great Britain to give up everything, or the colonies to give up everything. Neither one was practicable. The settlement was to be found midway between the two extremes. There is not a word of truth in the *Toronto Globe's* statement.

Hon. Mr. MILLS—My hon. friend showed the accuracy of that statement in the fourth proposition from Mr. Chamberlain's speech.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—My hon. friend is unfortunate in his interruption. He must consider the order of time a little. Sir Wilfrid landed in England before the conference met at all, and the *Toronto Globe* also rather forgot the order of time when it set up that plea for him, because his change of views regarding preferential trade occurred before his landing on the shores of England, before the conference met at all, and therefore nothing which may have been said there could possibly have influenced him.

And my hon. friend was still more unfortunate in regard to the order of time, because this fourth proposition which he referred to was made nearly two years ago, a full year and a half before the landing of the premier in England at all and did not occur in any shape or form at the opening of the colonial conference of the premiers in 1897 besides the fourth proposition was that a true *zollverein* was a proper subject for discussion. Therefore my hon. friend has not helped his leader at all, but rather has put him in a worse position than he was before he rose from his seat. I will not go back, I have already discussed that fourth proposition. I have already pointed out that Mr. Chamberlain mentioned exceptions from free trade and named the articles to which these exceptions would refer. It mentioned food, sugar and timber, as articles on which the colonies might be given a preference. Therefore my hon. friend is very unfortunate in his interruption, because he has only left his premier in a worse position, if anything, than he was before.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—He could not do that ; that is impossible.