

Such was the opinion of the hon. member for Quebec East last year. The hon. member must know that a Government, to maintain itself, must necessarily levy taxes. In that case, I take up his argument and I say with him: if there are articles which are to be subjected to taxes, they certainly are the articles of luxury, and if there is an article pertaining to that category it is assuredly tobacco. I think, Mr. Speaker, that the fears expressed by the hon. member will vanish into smoke. He says that in voting against that motion we are going to change our policy, and that we are going to vote in opposition to our former utterances. He is mistaken; in those days, when the Liberal party was in power, there was a tax of ten cents on tobacco, and we always asked that that tax should be reduced; perhaps did we ask that it should be completely taken off.

Mr. BOURASSA. Perhaps the hon. member will allow me to tell him that they did not ask for the reduction, but for the abolition of the tax.

Mr. LANDRY. That is just what I was saying. It seems to me that if we were asking for the abolition, we were necessarily wishing for a reduction, for the lesser must be contained in the greater. When the present Administration came into power, it met the wishes of the people by reducing by more than one-half the duties levied on tobacco. Since it is necessary that the people should pay taxes, in order that the Government may meet an indispensable expenditure, I agree with the hon. member for Quebec East that articles of luxury are to be taxed in preference to all others, and for that reason I think we should vote against the amendment, because it simply seeks to take off an article of luxury a necessary tax, which it would be then necessary to levy on other articles, perhaps necessities of life.

Mr. CASGRAIN. Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. member for Niagara (Mr. Plumb) say but a moment ago that one's ideas change when one crosses the seas. I think that this year, he too will change his opinions. If I refer to a motion made in this House on the 23rd April, 1878, and which is almost identical with the present one, the only difference to be found is that the quantity of tobacco is specified in the motion. I see that the Government intends giving a vote entirely different to the one it gave on that occasion; and, on referring to the proceedings of the House at that date, I see that the hon. member for Niagara (Mr. Plumb) is one of those who voted in favor of the motion; I notice also that at the time, you yourself, Mr. Speaker, were in favor of that motion and that you seconded it; I see that the hon. Minister of Customs (Mr. Bowell) likewise voted in its favor; I also see that the hon. member for Hochelaga (Mr. Desjardins) voted in the same way; I see that the then hon. member for Kingston (Sir John A. Macdonald) voted likewise; I see also that the hon. Minister of Railways (Sir Charles Tupper) voted in the same way. I was about to forget the hon. Minister of Public Works (Mr. Langevin) who certainly does not deserve to be forgotten; he also voted likewise. Now, if we refer to the speeches which were delivered at the time the motion was made, we shall see that one defended then what one is opposing at the present time. If ever there was a favorable time to reduce this tax, it is now; for if we are to accept the data of the hon. Minister of Finance, there is to be a surplus at the end of the year; now, as the cultivation of tobacco is increasing considerably in the Province of Quebec, it would be merely compensating the grower of tobacco. Under the circumstances, I intend voting against the motion.

Mr. VALIN. Would the hon. member state how he voted at the time?

Mr. CASGRAIN. I voted in favor of the motion.

Mr. BECHARD. Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Public Works (Mr. Langevin) in answering my hon. friend

the member for St. John's (Mr. Bourassa) accused him of making that motion in order to acquire political capital. I am convinced that such is not the intention of my hon. friend; in presenting this motion, he merely adheres to the policy which he has ever followed whenever that question came up before Parliament; and in seconding the motion I am but following the policy I have ever followed. I remember when a duty was first levied on Canadian tobacco; it was during the First Parliament of the First Session of 1867. I was the first to present an amendment to abolish that duty. I looked upon the production of tobacco as a great agricultural resource, which was rapidly developing in our country, and which deserved to be encouraged. I have just said that the accusation of the hon. Minister of Public Works is without foundation. Was the object of his friend, who, when he was in Opposition, made a similar motion, simply that of making political capital? Did the hon. Minister of Public Works, when voting in favor of that motion, seek for political capital? Certainly not. Well, then, I maintain that this accusation can no more be brought against my hon. friend for St. John (Mr. Bourassa) than against them, when they were in Opposition. I must, nevertheless, say, Mr. Speaker, that in seconding the motion of my hon. friend no sentiment of administration for any Protectionist policy impels me to do so, but since we have a system tending to protect all classes of society, I think it would only be fair and reasonable to protect the farmers of Canada, as long as such a tariff is in existence, and inasmuch as it can be done. Tobacco is one of the few articles, the cultivation whereof, may, in my opinion be protected, because it is an article that we cannot produce in a sufficiently large quantity to meet the consumption, and consequently we are obliged to import it. If you levy Excise duties on tobacco grown in Canada, and if you levy duties on imported tobacco in the leaf, as a result the price of that article will increase and you will thereby be giving the producer of tobacco in Canada the advantage of selling his tobacco at a higher price in proportion to the duties levied on that article.

Mr. LANDRY. I will call the hon. member's attention to the fact that there are in the country considerable differential duties.

Mr. BECHARD. The motion of my hon. friend merely asks that more protection should be given to the Canadian farmer. It has been established that the excise duties in force to-day discourage the farmers from growing tobacco, whilst the levying of Customs' duties would stimulate the production of Canadian tobacco.

Mr. BERGERON. It is quite natural that the hon. member for St. John should present this motion. At every Session of Parliament it is a regular occurrence that an hon. gentleman should rise and move that no tax be levied on Canadian grown tobacco. If I remember aright, the first tax imposed on Canadian tobacco, was imposed by a Liberal Government.

Mr. BÉCHARD. No; it was imposed in 1867.

Mr. BERGERON. In 1867 a tax of 6 cents was imposed by the Conservative party, and it was a continuance of the tax which had been imposed by the Liberal party in 1863. When the Liberals came into power again, they raised the tax to 10 cents. On the 23rd of April, 1878, a motion was made by the hon. member for Beauce (Mr. Bolduc) to abolish the duty, and that motion was supported by the hon. member for St. John, who, at least, is acting consistently in the matter. This cannot be said of the hon. member for Quebec East (Mr. Laurier) who, though he now contends there should be no tax on Canadian tobacco, in 1878, according to the Journals of the House, voted against the motion of the hon. member for Beauce, to take off that duty, and thus voted in favor of keeping it, as it then stood,