

these treaties but I think as respects the majority of them no question need arise. It will, I believe, be admitted that in most cases the terms of those treaties will not interfere with our liberty of action. Any question that may arise must come as respects the Belgian treaty of 1862 or the treaty with the German Zollverein of 1865. Both of these treaties do seem to provide, that it shall not be the privilege of any colony to admit the products of Great Britain into its market without extending similar privileges to all countries having the favoured-nation clause.

How far we ought to acknowledge that as a principle that could be properly applied to a self-governing colony like Canada, might well be a question for consideration; but, Sir, I am not disposed to raise that question to-day. I wish to draw attention to the fact, that there is an important distinction between the policy which seems to be forbidden by the Belgian and German treaties, and the policy which I have the honour to submit to the House. By the Belgian and German treaties, any colony would be forbidden to make a preferential agreement with Great Britain alone. We do not by our resolutions offer anything to Great Britain alone. We recognize the fact that Great Britain by her liberal policy is in a position to avail herself of this offer immediately, but we make our offer not to Great Britain only, but to every nation which is prepared to accept it. We make it to every country which is willing to establish fair and reasonable trade relations with Canada.

Now, I shall not undertake to pass any judgment upon this very important question of the most-favoured-nation clauses of these Imperial treaties. It is an international question, and it is well that we should reserve our final judgment upon it. We recognize that it is a question upon which we shall ultimately have to consult with Her Majesty's Government, and I need not say that any view that may be taken by Her Majesty's Government will be considered by the Government of Canada with the respect that is due to any representation that might be made upon any subject, but above all, on a question of an international character. I say that it does not seem fair and reasonable that we should be obliged, while we are offering certain terms, not to Great Britain only but to all countries which will place themselves in the same position—it does not seem to be fair and reasonable that we should be obliged to extend the privileges of this schedule, which we call a reciprocal tariff, to nations which are not willing to do anything in return.

I admit there may be difficulties in the way. It may be possible that the view we take of this matter is not the correct view, but we say it is only fair and reasonable in the interests of Canada, in the interest of fair trade between ourselves and Great Bri-

tain, that we should to-day take the position, that the favoured-nation clauses do not apply; and that this resolution which I put upon the Table of the House will only extend to such countries as are prepared to give admission to our products under fair terms.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. I would draw the attention of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Fielding) to the fact that the treaty is not made between Canada and other countries. The treaty is made between Great Britain, Belgium and Germany, and applies to all countries that have most-favoured-nation treatment with England. The express terms of one of those treaties, at all events, is that England will not permit any higher rate of duty to be charged upon articles coming from those countries than is charged upon like articles coming from Great Britain herself. If I am correct in my reading of the treaties, the proposal of the hon. gentleman is entirely delusive, and will have no effect whatever.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I have to thank my hon. friend for the information that Canada has not made these treaties. I thought, of course, that we all understood that Canada does not make treaties directly but does so only through Her Majesty's Government; and therefore there is not very much information in what my hon. friend has said on that point. What I understand, subject to the ultimate judgment of men who know more than I do—I do not speak as an oracle—with regard to the Belgian and German treaties, is that Great Britain will not allow any colony to offer concessions to Great Britain without at the same time offering them to those countries.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. Nothing of the kind.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. While my hon. friend is willing to settle that question in that airy way which is so delightful—

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. The treaty speaks for itself in express terms.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Even if it does, the world moves, and possibly the step we are taking to-night may have the effect—and that may be one of the advantages of it—of drawing the attention of Her Majesty's Government and of the English public to the position of those treaties, and thus opening up the question. Meantime, Sir, recognizing the difficulties, recognizing the possibility that our judgment may be mistaken, and recognizing the obligations we may owe as part of the Empire, we intend for the present to take the view that inasmuch as we offer these conditions to other nations, if they do not see fit to accept them, the responsibility rests upon them and not upon Canada.