

with pleasure—he seems to have shown in small matters as in great that a spirit of carelessness and indifference has settled upon his administration, making it almost impossible for them to do anything under the sun, and do it right. For example, the hon. leader of the opposition called attention to the fact that in the speech from the Throne there was no reference to a revision of the tariff, a question that has certainly excited the public mind as much as any that can be brought before the House, outside of the transcontinental railway scheme; and the right hon. leader of the government, in explaining why the subject had not been referred to in the speech from the Throne, stated that it was not the proper place to mention such a subject, but that the proper place would be the budget debate. I have taken the pains to refer to the few occasions on which revisions of the tariff have taken place. Referring to 'Hansard' of 1879, when the Conservative party was returned to power and introduced the national policy, I find that the speech from the Throne contained this sentence:

By the application of the strictest economy to the public expenditure, and by the readjustment of the tariff with the view of increasing the revenue, and, at the same time, of developing and encouraging the various industries of Canada, you will, I trust, be enabled to restore the equilibrium between revenue and expenditure.

The next time the matter came before the House was in 1894, when the administration of that day decided to make some changes, perhaps not altogether wisely, but, as they said themselves, for the purpose of cutting off the mouldering branches. In the speech from the Throne on that occasion I find this sentence:

At an early date a measure will be laid before you having for its object a revision of the duties of customs with a view to meet the changes which time has effected in business operations of all kinds throughout the Dominion.

And in 1897, when the ministry presided over by the right hon. gentleman himself, having come into power, were bound to make some attempt to change the tariff, I find in the speech from the Throne this sentence:

A measure will be submitted to you for the revision of the tariff, which it is believed will provide the necessary revenue, and, while having due regard to industrial interests, will make our fiscal system more satisfactory to the masses of the people.

So that we find on every occasion on which the tariff has been dealt with to any extent, the matter has been announced in the speech from the Throne. But if on ordinary occasions, with an ordinary government, it is right and proper that such a matter as a fiscal policy should be announced in the speech from the Throne, how much more necessary is it under a government such as

this, when no man in Canada can say whether it is a free trade or protectionist government. If the government were committed either to free trade or protection, the manufacturers and business men generally would know the principles upon which a revision of the tariff would be made; the details, of course, must remain unknown until the matter comes before the House. But the government have transgressed a plain and reasonable rule in not even mentioning the matter in the speech from the Throne.

The right hon. the premier referred also to the Conservative party of the province of Quebec as being without a leader, and drew a very harrowing picture of an old hulk drifting out to sea without a captain and commanded by a junta from the shore. I am not going to admit that the right hon. gentleman's description is correct, for I might remind him that the Conservative party has a leader, not only for Quebec but for the whole Dominion of Canada, my hon. friend and leader from Halifax. But admitting for the sake of argument that what he said was true, what must he think of the reputation and standing of his government in the province of Quebec, when, without a leader of the Conservative party to oppose them, their legions were shattered as they were in the elections a few days ago? If against a non-commanded foe the veteran leaders of the government could not do any better than they did the other day, when they merely saved themselves from an utter rout in constituency after constituency, what will they do in the general elections when the people of Quebec, as the people of every other province, will rally around the leader of the Conservative party? I leave it to hon. gentlemen themselves to say.

Then, the right hon. gentleman spoke of Providence having inspired the government in 1897 when they introduced the tariff which has since been in force. I am sure the right hon. gentleman did not speak seriously when he made the reference to Providence. The right hon. gentleman is aware that Providence knows all things, and therefore knows the platform laid down by the Liberal party in their convention in the city of Ottawa. In the light of that platform it seems to me almost a blasphemy to say that Providence suggested to the government that they should violate every promise they made to the people of this country. If they were inspired, the inspiration must have come from the opposite quarter.

I find some other omissions from the bill of fare brought down to the House, which was spoken of yesterday as a meagre bill. The hon. mover of the address intimated that he should be very glad if the government took up the question of the admission of Newfoundland into the confederation. I have no intention at this stage of the session of speaking at any length on this subject; but it seems to me, viewing the