

of Finance (Mr. Fielding), to whose wide experience and sound judgment in financial and tariff matters the country is mainly indebted for the essential features of the budget which has been presented to the House, will speak again in the course of the debate with reference to some of the criticisms that have been directed against it by hon. gentleman opposite. In the circumstances, I should much have preferred to leave to my hon. friend such further reply as may be necessary. Inasmuch, however, as my right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Meighen) has seen well to go beyond the subject matter of the budget to direct his attack against the Liberal party as a whole in what, with characteristic use of opprobrious epithets, he declares to be a lack of honour and fidelity to pledges and a repudiation of principles, and as certain other hon. members in the course of this debate have sought by their remarks to give to the public a wholly erroneous impression as to the character of the budget, I may perhaps be forgiven for taking up more of the time of the House at this stage of the debate in a few general observations upon some of the matters referred to in criticism.

First, let me speak of the charge that the action taken by the Liberal party in this budget has not been in accordance with the platform of the Liberal party as laid down at the convention of 1919. I say that any such charge is wholly unwarranted. I think I am as familiar as any member of the House with the platform of 1919 and with what took place at the Liberal convention in reference to it. When I was honoured by the members of that convention with the position of leader of the Liberal party, I did not wait until those present at the convention had dispersed, to express what I conceived to be the purpose of the platform which had been laid down and the spirit in which the party would expect to have it interpreted. Indeed, the first remarks I made on the occasion were to the effect—and I used at that time a simile which I thought was obvious to all, and which I still think is as appropriate as any that could be used—that I regarded the platform drafted by the convention as a chart on which had been plotted the direction the Liberal party would be expected to take, should it be returned to power. I made it perfectly plain at the time in the use of that simile, that I did not regard the party as bound by the platform *literatim et verbatim*, pledged to carry out each line and letter of it during the

first year or two we might be in office. Indeed, I made another fact equally plain, which was that I should not attempt, if at the head of the government, to follow the example of the then Prime Minister the present leader of the Opposition, of trying to direct the operations of government pretty much, if not wholly, by myself; I stated that I would endeavour to surround myself with the ablest men whom this country might send to parliament, and from their collective wisdom, I would seek to derive the guidance necessary to decide how far at any particular time it might be wise to go in pursuing the course plotted for us by the convention. That was the statement I made in the presence of all the delegates on that occasion. There was no exception taken to that attitude; there has been, so far as I know, no exception on the part of the Liberal party as a whole to that attitude from that day up to the present.

Some little time after the convention had been held, and I had again the privilege of having a seat in this House, while the Liberal party were still in opposition, I had the honour of seconding a resolution which was introduced by the present Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) setting forth the attitude which we believed was the one the party was expected to take towards any matters of tariff revision. I shall not read the whole of that resolution, but I will quote the concluding paragraphs of it. It was moved by the present Minister of Finance on May 10, 1921, and seconded by myself:

That such changes should be made in the customs duties as may be expected to reduce the cost of living, and to reduce also the cost of implements of production required for the efficient development of the natural resources of the Dominion;

That, while keeping this aim clearly in mind, the House recognizes that in any readjustment of the tariff that may take place, regard must be had to existing conditions of trade, and changes made in such a manner as will cause the least possible disturbance of business.

That was the position of the Liberal party as it was asserted in this House of Commons after the Liberal convention of 1919 and before the general election of 1921. And that was the position we took when we went to the country.

I noticed in the remarks of my right hon. friend (Mr. Meighen) yesterday, that although he introduced many subjects in the course of his speech, there was one very significant omission from all that he said. He made no reference whatever to a single speech of mine delivered during the campaign of 1921. I spoke in every province of the Dominion with the exception only of the