

that subject, not exactly a statement perhaps as to the amount of duty to be imposed, but a statement sufficiently plain to indicate the lines on which we would proceed. I do not require to enter fully into the circumstances under which I made that statement. I quite realized at the moment that I must submit to some misunderstanding prevailing as to my action, but we feel assured that the wisdom of the policy pursued by the Government will be in due course vindicated before the House. I believe it was in the interest of all concerned that certain doubts and misunderstandings which existed at Washington in regard to the position of Canada on the coal question should be removed.

An hon. MEMBER. Particularly Mr. Whitney.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I believe that statement served a useful purpose in removing doubts and misunderstandings.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. In Nova Scotia.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I must say that I am surprised the hon. leader of the Opposition should have the courage to mention Nova Scotia. I was disposed to be exceedingly good, nice and gracious in the matter, and never mention the words. Now that the hon. gentleman has called attention to the subject, I suppose it will be in order to say that something happened in Nova Scotia two or three days ago. The hon. gentleman is not so proud of Nova Scotia as he used to be in the old days. But so far as the interruption imputes that my remarks in Montreal were made with any regard to Nova Scotia elections, or after any communication had with the Nova Scotia Government, I have already stated, and if it is important I will repeat it, that there is no foundation whatever for any statement of that kind. However that may be, I believe and the Government believe that a good purpose was served not only as regards the interests of the Dominion but in regard to all interests by having that statement made in Montreal in anticipation of the Budget speech.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. And the Nova Scotia elections, which had been postponed for the purpose.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. The Nova Scotia elections, we are told by the hon. gentleman were postponed for a purpose. I do not know the source of his information. I think the hon. gentleman does not know the people of Nova Scotia so well as he imagines he does; but one thing is certain, that Nova Scotia knows a good deal about the hon. gentleman, and voted accordingly. I was about to say, Sir, that the purpose for which my statement was made was a purpose having in view the best interests of the Dominion, as time will show.

Mr. FIELDING.

I believe that American public men are at this moment reconsidering their action in regard to the duty on coal, and whatever they may do in relation to their general policy, there is reasonable probability that they will reconsider their action on this point. I have strong hope, amounting to expectation, that in the end they will reduce the duty proposed in the Dingley Bill to 40 cents per ton, which is the duty in the American tariff to-day. I stated in Montreal, and I repeat now, that it is the desire of the Government to reduce the duty on coal. I stated at that time that if the American Government would leave the duty at 40 cents per ton, instead of increasing it to 75 cents as proposed in the Dingley Bill, our Government were prepared to meet them on that line and reduce our duty to meet their duty. I repeat that statement now. I have strong hopes that the Americans will eventually settle their duty at 40 cents per ton. If placed at 40 cents, I undertake to move that our duty be made 40 cents per ton, and I have strong expectations that this will be the end of the matter. But I think in the interest of the coal trade of the Dominion we should not act to-day on the assumption that the change will be made, and so, having clearly and distinctly stated that we are ready to reduce our duty to 40 cents if the American duty remains at that figure, we propose to defer action and see what they are going to do about it. I quite realize the possibility that the Americans will not be in a position to deal with the question, or at all events may not deal with it, before our tariff Bill goes through the House. If that should prove to be the fact, we would be prepared to come down to the House and make a further statement in relation to the coal duties.

Mr. HUGHES. I should like to ask why, on the same principle, the hon. gentleman does not maintain the duty on corn, so as to hold it as a set-off later to balance the duty on barley?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I cannot argue that question; there is good and sufficient reason for pursuing a different policy.

Mr. WALLACE. I understood the Minister of Finance to announce that he proposed to reduce the duty on olive oil from 30 per cent to 20 per cent. A large quantity of it, however, is at present free.

Mr. FOSTER. The item at present reads 30 per cent for olive oil prepared for salad purposes, all other olive oil is free. Is the same wording used in regard to the proposed duty of 20 per cent.

The CONTROLLER OF CUSTOMS (Mr. Paterson). The item is n.e.s. 20 per cent instead of 30.

Mr. FOSTER. If my hon. friend reads it that way he will add 20 per cent to the duty because olive oil n.e.s. is free.