

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—I think we have had so much of that kind of thing that we have to go further than to censure Mr. Fielding. The indecency of making this declaration when any intelligent man in the country will understand the object of it was to influence the coming elections in Nova Scotia—

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—I never thought of it.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—There could be no other object. My hon. friend says he never thought of it. He is the most innocent man in the world. No such thought ever comes into his innocent heart. He may never have thought of it. Perhaps he did not, but there were men around him who thought of it without any doubt, and if this was not the object in making the statement with regard to the coal duty why were there not advance statements made with regard to other industries which have just as good a right to be informed as to the policy of the government as the coal industry has. Is there any reason that can be shown why the coal interest was suffering from uncertainty as to the tariff more than any other interest?

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—Yes.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—I would like to take my seat if the hon. gentleman will tell me what that reason is.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—The announcement by the United States of a duty of 75 cents on Nova Scotia coal imported into the republic.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—What has that to do with it?

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—Everything.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—Your policy is free trade. What has the policy of the United States government to do with the coal duty in Canada?

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—That is not the only product of Canada on which there has been an announcement of an advance in the American duty. If that were the case there might be some reason in the statement of my hon. friend, but we know that it is not the only one. There are numerous articles on which the duty will be increased in the United States as well as coal, and the peo-

ple of the country have to look ahead in making their arrangements in other matters just as much as in the coal industry, and perhaps more. Take pork packing for instance. There is a certain season of the year when pork packers buy their stock, when the farmers put it in the market, and these men have been buying pork all winter, protected as the market was with 2 cents a pound duty, and they did not know and have not been able to learn, unless some special friends of the government have been advised by some one in the cabinet, what the change in the tariff is to be. The pork packer has no means of knowing whether the duty of 2 cents is to remain as a protection to that industry until the time arrives for him to sell his stock. Pork has to be purchased some months before the packer can dispose of it. Farmers in my province were bringing pork to market in the months of January, February and March which they sold at a loss on account of the uncertainty. The packers were buying and had not the means of sending it away during the winter and did not know but by the time their pork would reach the lumbermen's camp or the market where it was sold that the duty might be abolished. Why were not the pork packers and farmers informed of the intention of the government, as well as the coal miners? Mr. Laurier made a declaration at St. Johns, P. Q., during the election of Mr. Tarte, last summer, announcing that an inquiry was going to be made—that Mr. Fielding was going to travel over the country to investigate the working of the tariff. I felt in my heart then that the government intended to recede from their pre-election promises on the trade question to a great extent and were trying to get a good excuse for doing it. And that was long before the renewal of McKinley tariff was threatened by the United States Congress. My reason for that opinion I stated briefly in this House on that occasion. It was that if they intended to adhere to their pre-election pledges and give us a tariff for revenue only it was not necessary to go about the country consulting the manufacturers at all. The productiveness of the tax, the revenue requirements of the country and such considerations as these, were all they had a right to consider, but the moment they went around with their caps in the hands asking how this industry and that industry was going to be