

I would like to ask my right hon. friend why he does not have his own way. He has been in power in this country for the past fourteen years, and he knows that he denounced protection as a curse and the ruin of this country during all the years from 1887 to 1896, and in the west he was confronted with these statements. He told us in 1895, and I think he has told us in the west recently, that while he could not abolish protection absolutely and at once, he would do it in fairly short metre; he would do it as they had done it in England, as Sir Robert Peel had done it in England. It might not take so long, he told us in 1895; I think it was at Massey Hall in Toronto—I have the extract under my hand, but I will not weary the House with it. He told the people of this country in February, 1895, that he would do it more quickly than it had been done in Great Britain, where it had been a long process. How was it done in Great Britain? Sir Robert Peel undertook the task in 1842 by a sliding scale of duties, and in 1846 he completed the task by the scale of duties which came completely into force in 1849. Therefore the process in Great Britain covered only seven years, and, as was stated by the mover of the address, my right hon. friend has been in power for nearly 15 years. What did he next say in the west? I come to his announcement at Saskatchewan on the 23rd of July, when he said:—

Further revision must be made, but before revision is undertaken, the government will again appoint a commission to investigate. This commission will consult with the grain growers, it will consult with the various interests concerned, it will aim, having in view the common wealth of our common country, to go as far as may be justifiable toward the trade policy of England, the shining example of the world, although it cannot be expected that we can accomplish in one or two generations what it took in England eight centuries to arrive at.

So that the hopes of the freetraders of this country are stimulated and encouraged in this way, that having been 15 years in power and having had some control over the tariff in that period, the government undertake, as far as may be justifiable, to press that part of their policy so vigorously that it will come into force in about one or more generations. I do not know whether my hon. friend regards that as a very satisfactory implementing of his promise, but I am bound to say that it is very much an implementing of what he did prophesy on one occasion at least.

On the 5th of February, 1895, my right hon. friend was speaking in the city of Toronto upon the trade and other questions, and he held up to scorn and condemnation the conduct of the Conservative government of that day. In tones of biting sarcasm, he then described the very policy which he,

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himself has been carrying out during the past 15 years. Let me read to the right hon. gentleman the words he used on that occasion:—

When in power I think I know a way in which I can maintain my reputation—that is when a question comes before me that is difficult to solve, to avoid it, to do nothing, and to look wise.

For instance, suppose when a Liberal government were in power they had to deal with the question of prohibition. There would be a possibility of alienating the sympathies of the prohibitionists if we dealt with it in one way, or the sympathies of the liquor men if we dealt with it in another way. Then it would be possible for us to appoint a commission, and that commission would go on for one, two or three years and it might cost \$100,000 and more to the country; but our government would be saved in the meantime and the ministers would look wise.

Does not this extract indicate the absolute truth of the homely English proverb that many a true word is spoken in jest? But that was not all, there is more to follow, and I think what follows it even a little better than the last. I commend it especially to my hon. friends from the west, having regard to the utterances of the right hon. gentleman in the west to which I have just called attention:—

Suppose we have to deal with and to reform the tariff, which we certainly will have to deal with, we might appoint a royal commission, go about the country interviewing manufacturers in secret, interviewing farmers in public, lecturing farmers, browbeating them and showing them their stupidity because they do not acknowledge the beauties of the national policy.

This is the way in which men can maintain their reputation for capability and small cuteness.

Well, the farmers of the west were so much bewildered by what my right hon. friend said out there that they are coming down here 500 strong on the 16th of December to find out what it all means. When they arrive I hope he will have something a little more definite to tell them than what he told them in his speech to which I have just alluded. Speaking of his policy, he said at Saskatoon:—

It will aim, having in view the commonwealth of our common country, to go as far as may be justifiable towards the trade policy of England.

That is exactly what the west complains of. It complains that his policy has only been aiming for the past 15 years and up to the present has not hit anything—certainly not hit anything at all in the shape of what the right hon. gentleman submitted as his policy in 1894. I would call his attention to the use of the word 'justifiable':—