

protective tariff? It is to force the consumer to purchase in the home market. If we could all get a little advantage over each other and be put on a footing of equality, I could recognize the fairness of it, but we are protecting a favoured few—fifteen per cent of the population—and the other eighty-five per cent have to pay the shot. It is unfair—it is robbing the country, and disturbing the financial equality that we ought all to stand on. Is it not a fact that a few men in Canada are getting richer and a good many are getting poorer or cannot make headway? There is no land under the sun as favoured as Canada is, no country has such forests and fisheries. No country has finer land to till. No country can produce cheaper under normal circumstances than Canada, none can more successfully compete with the world in everything that is indigenous to the soil, but because it suits the policy of the Government to favour a few individuals who, it is said, reciprocate one way or another—of course I do not speak of the Red Parlour or any reciprocity of that sort—but for some reason or other there is a disposition to tax the consumer for the benefit of the few. While Canada has been growing richer, there is no doubt about it, the wealth is not fairly distributed. It runs into particular lines, it runs into particular industries that are subsidized by the State, because it is a subsidy by the State where you compel people to purchase the articles they desire from certain producers. That is a subsidy given to the producer by the State at the expense of the consumer. There is no other way of looking at it. The hon. gentleman ascribes the depression in the United States to their defective banking system. Their banking system is not as good as ours—there is no doubt about that—but that could not disturb, to the extent that it did, the condition of the United States. It was due simply to the protective policy. The silver men of Nevada and California made a ring with the iron, the coal and other interests of the United States and said “here we are in the swim, we want the United States Government to buy our silver.” The Government of the United States agreed to buy one million dollars silver every week, and they have been throwing over fifty millions of dollars a year away—they might as well have thrown it into the sea. They have been buying an article that is daily being depressed in value, an article they cannot get rid of. They would go into bank-

ruptcy in a few years if they persisted in it. They now have \$500,000,000 of silver in their vaults. Is not that enough to create a depression in a country? That \$500,000,000 is held at a national loss. That is the cause of the depression, and the gold is being exported rapidly from the country. The reserve of gold from week to week was decreasing. It was simply the outgrowth of their extreme protective policy. When you get a protective policy—happily it has not got such a hold on the Canadian people as it had on the people of the United States—it is almost impossible to shake it off. The people of the United States decided in favour of free trade or a revenue tariff a year and a half ago, yet to-day they are powerless, because even Democrats get into the ranks, just as in this country opponents of the Government get into the combines, and favoured and subsidized companies are incorporated, and the moment they do that they become true Tories and upholders of a protective policy. The moment we are ourselves interested, we are influenced. My hon. friend thinks that is an admission—it is an admission simply that human nature is weak, and we are all, Grit or Tory, liable to the same influences. Every man is a protectionist in his own business and a free trader in every one else's. That is the supreme law of human nature. We may as well be frank; there is no use deceiving ourselves. When persons become interested in any particular business they naturally want to keep others out. They get 30 per cent protection, and then they want 35; they get 35, and then they want 40, and so it goes on. Unless the policy of the Government gets a rude shake at the next election, it may continue going on in this country for the next 25 years, because if you give the leading and influential men in the country an interest in its growth and development, you cannot shake it off. The mass of the people do not understand the matter. It is only recently that the farming interest has taken this question up, and why? Simply because the McKinley tariff and the Foster tariff were two blessings in disguise. They taught the people to reason and to look for the origin of things, and to endeavour to find out what was the cause of the depression and of the hard times. It was a very difficult matter to convince them, because the tariff was thought to be some ingenious way of putting money