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The Leader of the Opposition

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Protection and Wages

You have heard it said that protection means higher wages for the working man, that protection, above all, is in the interests of the working man, that as you help the working man you would help the farmers in the country.

There has never been a time in Canada, there has never been a time in any other country in the world, as far as I know, when we had as much in the way of protection as we have had in Canada these last five years; and there has never been a time in history when there was such a large number of unemployed and when wages were as low as they have been in the past five years. (Applause).

That should answer once and for all this talk that protection is necessary for the working man. Protection is necessary to create monopolies, protection is necessary to create combines, protection is one way whereby you can so restrict production, to control the market, to keep the prices up, and give a higher return to capital. But what about labour? Labour remains what it is, so

far as numbers are concerned.

You hear a lot of talk about protection being necessary. You hear it said, "If you elect Mr. King and the Liberals and they begin to lower the tariffs, what will happen? You will all be out of employment."

Well, you are out of employment now, in many cases, as the result of the high protection; and I want to say that if you turn back to the days of the Liberal administration when we had lower tariffs, you had a period of greater employment during all that time than you had in Canada at any time. (Applause).

What has been the result? Let me give you just one example. Take the United States.

A couple of years ago the President of the United States intimated that he had received power from Congress to make special agreements with countries prepared to make agreements with the United States,—reciprocal agreements to mutual advantage.

Naturally Canada being the closest to the United States, I am sure the President thought of a reciprocal agreement with Canada. But the Conservatives were going to blast their way into the people's houses.

In matters of trade you have to take the attitude that if you are going to trade with us you will have to come across yourself and you will have to negotiate along the line of free relationship. What happened? Take some of the countries that did not say they were going to blast their way into the markets of the world.

Take Belgium, an agreement has been made between the United States and that country; also with the United States and Sweden. Brazil is another country very similar to our own and Brazil has made an agreement with the United States. Cuba has made an agreement. They have got into the market and they are there today and are getting a foothold and it is going to be difficult for another country to get in. With our theories of economic warfare we have been losing markets. (Applause).

Britain, the Argentine and other countries have been finding it possible to make arrangements with other markets, not by blasting their way, but by saying, "we are here to trade if necessary or barter."

They have been getting a foothold in different markets and that is what is going to make it very serious for any Government in Canada.

There are many markets we should have had that have been taken away from us. That is the great mistake, I think, that has been made, and a mistaken attitude. There is a mistake in the way the policy has been put into force. May I point this out and I am quite clear about there having been a mistake made.

When the Liberal administration came into office in 1921 we found tariffs very high, but not prohibitive, like today

We found not only that, but we found the country in a depressed condition, when money was being paid out of the Federal treasury for unemployment relief.

We said it may be necessary to use money to help a temporary situation. You can't let people starve but you can't go on dealing with the unemployment question by simply taking money out of the public treasury and distributing it by millions through the country. (Applause).