

being made about the effects this arrangement will have upon the price of special commodities. I do not think that a lowering of the tariff is likely to raise prices to the consumers of the country; yet I am sure that so far as the west is concerned it will benefit the producers. The farmer in the west stands very largely to benefit by the increased price of his land holdings. It is the magnificent prerogative of Canada to-day to offer to immigrants a splendid heritage of free land and independence in the possession of their land. I think if we get this prosperity I am talking of, the farmers will benefit by the increase of their wealth, such is the fortunate position of this great country, without damaging consumers at all. As a free trader, I should regret if any lowering of the tariffs led to the punishment for one moment of the consumers. There may be temporary inconveniences, there may be temporary upsets of things in certain localities, but we believe benefit will be the broad outcome of the policy.

Now, I want to look for a few moments at some of the main positions which were taken up in a very serious argument by my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster), some of the main positions which were not dealt with at all by my hon. friend from South Wellington (Mr. Guthrie). I certainly think that with those parts he did deal with, he proved to be a successful controversialist. But I think there was an argument presented which deserves the consideration of some one in this House; because, when the hon. member for North Toronto favours us with his views at such length he naturally commands our attention, our respectful attention, and his arguments in favour of protection, and, therefore, against the reciprocity arrangement, have to be examined. Now, the member for North Toronto said: There is a labour question involved in this. I may say that I listened to every word of his speech, and I took notes of it; that was all I needed to do to give due respect to my hon. friend. After all, if one listens to a speech of four hours and then has to read it, one would be forgetting what was due to the consideration of the brevity of human life. I will endeavour not to misrepresent my hon. friend's position in any way. There was a suggestion of hurt to labour. There is great solicitude on the part of protectionists for labour. The labouring men, of course, in a democratic country, like this, have votes, and unless the labourers can be deluded into supporting protection the thing is doomed past all redemption. It is pathetic in the extreme to find the interests interested in labour. It is one of the hoary-headed fallacies with which error has bolstered itself, and reappears generation after generation. When

Mr. CLARK (Red Deer).

Mr. Cobden was fighting in Great Britain sixty or seventy years ago for the repeal of the corn laws, he made great fun of the contention that British labour would be hurt by cheap labour somewhere up the Baltic. He said: I do not know where it is, but it is somewhere up the Baltic, and British labour is going to be ruined by it. I wish that hon. gentlemen who talk upon this labour question would reflect that the very things they are saying in regard to this reciprocity question hurting Canadian labour are being said on the American side about the cheap Canadian labour hurting American labour. That would surely, even to the most partisan intellect, bring conviction that there is nothing in this outcry. What are the facts about labour? There was this peculiarity in the portion of the speech of my hon. friend with which I am dealing, which deposes me from the position of the champion theorist in this House, for, as regards some of the figures, they were knocked into the proverbial cocked hat by the hon. member for South Wellington. In defending his theory of protection he gave the facts of the history of commerce the widest berth it was possible to do. I am in the memory and judgment of the House when I say that his speech along these lines was pure theory, woven out of his own brain. He might never have known there was a history of commerce, he might never have known there was trade going on all over the world among the nations of the earth. I want very briefly to follow an exactly opposite method and to cede to my hon. friend willingly any honour there is in being a pure theorist. What are the facts that bear upon this argument of how far labour is going to be hurt? It is beyond possibility of contradiction that the best paid labour in Europe to-day is the labour of the British islands, whether skilled or unskilled, and I take it that that nearly ends the argument, because there is no fair comparison between the labour of Great Britain and the labour of this continent; labour on this continent is so scarce that it is bound to be highly paid, and protection, in my mind, has nothing whatever to do with it. I take it that that fact is an argument which cannot be contradicted, and nearly ends all discussion upon the subject.

Mr. Hobson, a well-known British economist, wrote a pamphlet a short time ago in which he showed as clearly as statistics can prove anything that in the United States under the McKinley tariff the proportion of the total wealth of the country going to labour was smaller than under the lower Wilson tariff, and that the proportion of wealth going to labour under the lower Wilson tariff raised and then under the Dingley tariff it sank once more.