Massey-Harris and The Tariff

To the Committee of the Cabinet appointed to hear evidence relating to the Canadian Customs Tariff:

GENTLEMEN:

While I am appearing before you to-day merely as a representative of the Massey-Harris Company and not of the Agricultural Implement Industry as a whole, it would seem appropriate to refer, in opening, to the history of the Industry in Canada.

The first Implement Companies began operation between 1840 and 1850 and a few of them have been in continuous operation since that date. It would be hard to conceive of any more natural line of manufacture for Canada than that of agricultural machinery. The development of agriculture and the making of agricultural implements have been very closely interwoven. Without the great advance in the design and manufacture of machines which has taken place during this period, agriculture on its present scale would have been quite impossible, and only the mechanical progress of the past forty years has made possible agriculture as it is now carried on in Western Canada. Canadians, in proportion to their numbers, have had a very large share indeed in designing and perfecting farm machinery, as your patent records will show.

The Tariff from its inception benefits the Consumer

In 1883 a tariff of 35% was placed upon farm implements, and, considering the then limited agricultural area of Canada, an extraordinary number of companies entered into the manufacture of implements. For example, between the years 1886 and 1890, there were 19 different companies in Ontario making binders, while, at the same time in the United States there were only 9 companies in this line. This was a case where a high tariff most certainly acted to the advantage of the consumer. The presence of so many companies caused a competition so bitter that most of them were in time driven out of business, prices—through the competition—being too low to permit of their making any money.

Comparatively few of the original Companies survived but the industry is still a very important one, having at the present time a capital investment of $93,255,000 and employing, in all Branches, 31,000 persons. (A list of firms is attached as Exhibit "A") I venture to assert here that no industry in Canada has more thoroughly vindicated the "National Policy" or has brought more credit to the country.