

Summary of The Week's News of The World

Our Ottawa Letter

(BY THE GUIDE SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT)

PRESS GALLERY, OTTAWA, JAN. 20.

The protectionist farmers have at last arrived at Ottawa, and have presented their views to Sir Wilfrid Laurier. They came yesterday and were received in the premier's private office, accompanied by five members of parliament and the representative of The Guide. The deputation consisted of eleven Ontario farmers and their chief spokesman was David Jackson, of Grimsby, the gentleman who attended at the convention of the Canadian Council of Agriculture which was held at Ottawa on the day before the big delegation of December 16. Mr. Jackson informed Sir Wilfrid that he and his friends represented no organization, but they came there to represent the silent voice of the people who were satisfied with the present condition of affairs in regard to the tariff. The Dominion Grange, he asserted, did not represent the farmers of Ontario or the East, and the delegation which waited upon the government on the 16th of December was composed of demagogues. He considered that the majority of the farmers were satisfied with the present tariff, and urged that no change should be made without a mandate from the people.

D. H. Moyer, of Campden, Lincoln county, supported the views of Mr. Jackson, and said that the fruit growers of his district were prosperous men, many of them holding land which was worth from \$600 to \$1,000 an acre.

Bruce Johnston, of Peterboro, spoke as a vegetable grower, and said the only grievance which he had was that under the present tariff early vegetables produced in the United States at a time when the Canadian gardeners could not have their stuff ready for the market were imported and sold in Canada. He thought the market should be wholly conserved for the home growers, but if the government could not do anything to help them he hoped nothing would be done to harm them.

The deputation, however, was not entirely composed of protectionists, W. E. Galbraith, of Morpeth, Ont., saying the bean growers of Ontario were perfectly willing to have free trade in beans. Failing that, however, they desired to have the same degree of protection as was enjoyed by their United States neighbors.

Sir Wilfrid's Reply

Sir Wilfrid Laurier in reply expressed his gratification at receiving for the first time a deputation that was perfectly satisfied with the present condition of affairs and which did not ask for a change. He himself was quite satisfied and desired no change but there were others, he pointed out, who were not. There were fruit growers, for instance, who desired to have access to the United States markets, and to be able to supply the great demand that existed in New York for the unsurpassed peaches of the North Shore. It was a good axiom to leave well alone, but it was better to improve on that which was good, and his friends, Mr. Fielding and Mr. Paterson, were now at Washington endeavoring to make an arrangement which would be in the best interests of the whole country. While the negotiations were still proceeding he could not say what the result would be, but he was very glad to have heard their views. The deputation was introduced to Sir Wilfrid by D. A. Gordon, member for East Kent, who also introduced the manufacturers' deputation last week, and the other M. P.'s present were T. W. Crothers, East Elgin; A. H. Clark, South Essex; Richard Blain, Peel, and Dr. Rankin, Perth.

A "Different Deputation"

An hour earlier a somewhat different deputation waited upon the government and presented a very different request. This was also a farmers' deputation. It consisted of 500 men engaged in dairying in Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec, and it appeared before the government to ask among other things for free trade between Canada and the United States in dairy produce. The resolution which was presented on behalf of this large body of farmers by Charles Anderson, of Overton, was as follows: "We desire to express our entire approval of the efforts that are now being made by your government for better trade relations with the

United States, and would urge the government to secure as large a measure of free trade in dairy products as is possible to obtain."

This deputation was received by Sir Richard Cartwright, minister of trade and commerce, Hon. Frank Oliver, minister of the interior, and Hon. Charles Murphy, secretary of state, and in addition to the above resolution laid before the government, some grievances in connection with the marketing of cheese and butter. In the section of the country from which they came cheese was sold in the country subject to weight and inspection at Montreal, and a check was usually received from a week to ten days after the sale. It had frequently happened that the buyer became bankrupt in the meantime, and losses amounting to many thousands of dollars had been sustained by farmers in consequence. The delegation asked that buyers be licensed and bonded to ensure farmers against these losses, and further it was asked that the farmers at present appointed, the farmers at present having to accept the weights of an official appointed by the Montreal Board of Trade. Sir Richard pointed out some difficulties in connection with the bonding of buyers, but said he would discuss the matter with the minister of agriculture, who was out of the city.

Tariff Question Discussed

The tariff question was discussed in the House of Commons on Wednesday, Arthur Meighen (Con.), Portage la Prairie, moving the resolution of which he gave notice on the opening day of the session, as follows: "That in the opinion of this house, a substantial reduction in the import duties on agricultural implements is now due the agriculturists of Canada, and is in just accord with the true ends of a protective tariff." The time available for the discussion of this resolution on a Wednesday was three and a half hours, and only three members in addition to the mover were able to declare their views in this time, the other speakers being W. E. Knowles (Liberal), Moose Jaw; R. S. Lake (Con.), Qu'Appelle, and John Herron (Con.), Macleod, all of whom spoke in favor of lower duties. No division was taken, but the debate may possibly be resumed later in the session.

Mr. Meighen devoted the first portion of his speech to an exposition of the national policy inaugurated by the founder of the Conservative party, Sir John A. Macdonald. That policy, he said, was one of protection, but one of its essential principles was that as our industrial institutions advanced in strength and as they were able to acquire a hold on the home market the import duties were to be diminished and adjusted in order to meet the evolving and changing conditions. The present government, he said, while continuing the protective policy, had overlooked this principle; they had allowed protection to run rampant, and had become the slaves of those who helped them into power and who now maintained them there behind ramparts of gold.

Many Implements Exported

The test which should be applied in order to ascertain whether any particular industry had reached the point where the measure of protection which it was afforded could be reduced, was the proportion of imports to exports, and he maintained that the large export trade which the manufacturers of agricultural implements had been able to develop was a proof that the protection given to that industry had now accomplished its object and the time had arrived for a very material reduction in the import duties.

Mr. Meighen presented a mass of carefully prepared figures, tracing the growth of the export trade, and showed that in the last fiscal year the exports of agricultural implements amounted to \$4,319,385, and the imports to \$1,679,737, and excluding plows, the manufacture of which had not thrived as other lines had done, the exports were \$3,991,295, and imports only \$734,391, or about 85 of exports for every dollar of imports. On this showing Mr. Meighen maintained that the home market had clearly been secured to the Canadian manufacturers and an unanswerable case made out for a substantial reduction of

the tariff. In no other manufacturing industry did this condition exist, and consequently he had confined his resolution to agricultural implements.

Trade Figures

Mr. Meighen also dealt with other phases of the question, and by calculations based upon the government returns of trade and navigation showed that while the duty on most lines of implements had been reduced by the present government, the actual amount of duty paid on each machine had been increased by the higher valuation now placed upon imports by the customs appraisers. Previous to 1896, he said, five and six-foot binders were valued at \$80 and a 70 per cent. tariff made the duty \$16, but in 1910 the average valuation of a binder was \$111.92, and the average duty paid, at 17½ per cent., was \$19.61. Mowers, in 1909, were valued on the average at \$34.31 with a duty of \$6.78 per mower, but in 1910 the valuation was \$44 and the duty \$7.70. In addition to this the manufacturers had been given further advantages by drawbacks on raw material, which according to his figures amounted to \$2.35 per binder and 72 cents per mower. Mr. Meighen ridiculed the idea that the present tariff was a revenue tariff, saying that the government had added to the protection afforded to the manufacturers to such an extent that importations had practically been driven out altogether, and today the total revenue derived from the duties on agricultural implements was only \$283,633.99, and if plows were eliminated the revenue sank to the insignificant sum of \$92,954.71.

He did not say that a reduction of the duty would affect the price of agricultural implements to any very enormous extent, but he thought the reduction would be material and would render relief particularly to the farmers of the West, many of whom, notwithstanding statements which had been made to the contrary, were struggling between success and failure every hour.

Difference in Prices

The exact difference in the prices paid in the United States and Canada was very difficult to obtain, but he found that a wagon which cost \$90 cash at Portage la Prairie, Man., was sold for \$80 to \$85 on time at Grand Forks, North Dakota, while five foot mowers were \$57 at Portage, and \$47.50 to \$50 at Grand Forks, binders \$150 at Portage and \$142 to \$145 at Grand Forks, gang plows \$85 at Portage and \$70 at Grand Forks, and hay rakes \$57 at Portage and \$28 to \$35 at Grand Forks. From the Grand Forks prices 5 per cent. should be deducted for cash, and he estimated that the additional price which the Canadian manufacturer was able to exact from the farmer through protection was from 10 to 20 per cent.

W. E. Knowles, Moose Jaw, who followed Mr. Meighen, announced himself as a free trader, and expressed regret that the first voice which was raised on the question of the tariff after the recent record-breaking demonstration by the farmers of Canada, should be that of the member sent to parliament by the agriculturists of Portage la Prairie advocating the abominable doctrine of protection. Mr. Knowles confessed that he was an amateur in this matter and said he would not attempt to follow Mr. Meighen in his figures, but he must point out that the binder which was used today, and on which Mr. Meighen had said a larger amount of duty was paid than in years gone by, was a much more valuable binder. He regretted also that Mr. Meighen had confined his arguments to agricultural implements, and pointed out that even the poor washer woman who earned 75 cents a day, was forced, when she bought a woollen muffler for her orphan child, to pay her little tribute to the wealthy manufacturer out of her poverty.

"Infant Industries"

Speaking of "infant industries," Mr. Knowles said many of them had been born in 1878, over thirty years ago, and yet they were still suckling at the breast of the nation. When, he asked, was the day to come when they would not be infants? When would the manufacturers stand on their own feet like men, and go out and face the competition of the United States and the rest of the world? They were grown, and they were rich. One of them, the Massey-Harris Company, had

gone to the United States and had purchased another plant with \$3,000,000 which they had made out of the farmers of this country, and now that they have been fed and fattened they had an idea that they had vested rights which should never be taken from them.

To an interrupter who asked where he would raise the revenues of the country without the customs tariff, Mr. Knowles said he believed more money would be raised by a ten per cent. tariff, and even under direct taxation the burden upon the people would be less.

Dealing with the record of the government in the matter of the tariff, he pointed out that the ad valorem duties had been reduced and the British preference, first of 25 per cent. and afterwards of 33 1-3 per cent. had been introduced. Although the government had not moved as fast as he would have liked, they had gone in the right direction, and had saved the people roughly speaking more than a million dollars a year by the reductions they had made. He would rather more speed had been shown, but he was glad to be able to say that of the two parties there was no question in his mind or conscience that it was his duty to support the liberal party.

R. S. Lake (Con.), Qu'Appelle, spoke in favor of the motion, his argument following upon the lines laid down by Mr. Meighen, as did also John Herron (Con.), Macleod, who said he would go further than the resolution and say that the time had arrived when the duty should be entirely taken off binders and mowers and such other articles as the great implement trusts could ship out of Canada and sell in foreign countries against foreign competition. The arrival of six o'clock, which is the closing hour on Wednesday, prevented further discussion and the taking of a vote, and the resolution now stands upon the order paper in a position which makes it extremely doubtful whether it will again be reached this session.

Reply to Manufacturers

In his reply to the manufacturers last week Sir Wilfrid Laurier made it pretty plain that no material reduction in the duties on manufactured articles was to be expected as the result of the reciprocity negotiations now just about concluding at Washington, and if confirmation of the premier's meaning were required it was furnished by Postmaster General Lemieux when addressing the Montreal branch of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association at its annual banquet on Thursday evening. In his after dinner speech, Mr. Lemieux was not quite so guarded in his remarks as his chief had been, and he said: "I will say to you Canadian manufacturers that none of the industries of Canada will be found to suffer when the details of the negotiations are made public."

It was expected that some question as to the accuracy of the newspapers reporting this statement would be addressed to Mr. Lemieux in the house to-day, and that he would be taken to task for revealing government secrets, but such was not the case. He was, however, questioned by Dr. Neely, of Humboldt, as to whether he had used the expression "the wise fiscal policy adopted by this country 25 years ago," and said this was an error, he having spoken of the liberal policy adopted 15 years ago. This incident is typical of the spirit in which the tariff question, as well as almost every other question that comes before parliament, is discussed by our representatives. In the debate on Mr. Meighen's motion favoring a reduction of the duties on agricultural implements, it was not the justice of the proposal that the speakers chiefly addressed themselves to, but the question as to whether it was the liberal party or the conservative party that was in favor of higher or lower duties. In and out of the chamber, both parties are endeavoring to prove the insincerity of those of their opponents who are advocating a reduction of duties, and both sides declare that the other fellows have done their best to prevent the discussion of the matter and particularly the taking of a division. That there are individual members on both sides of the house who really desire a reduction of the tariff, there can be no doubt, but the only conclusion which an impartial observer can come to is that both parties, as a whole, regard tariff discussions as a great annoyance, and would gladly avoid declaring themselves on the question.