

scussion has turned to a very considerable extent on the trade question, and my hon. friend from Marquette—I am sorry to see that he is not in his place—has discussed the theory of free trade very fully and at great length in this debate. I may be permitted to say that in my opinion in discussing fiscal questions in Canada, we have very little to do with the abstract theories relating to free trade or protection. We do not advocate protection as an abstract theory and insist that it shall be maintained in all ages or in all countries alike. We do not pretend anything of the kind. That has never been the view of the Liberal-Conservative party, and when I heard the hon. Senator from Marquette speaking at great length and with great eloquence upon the benefits of free trade, discussing the question from a theoretical standpoint, I think it was altogether beside the mark. If theories were to prevail entirely, there would be very little need of Parliament; theories could be ground out by the universities, and there would be very little need of the adoption of fiscal policies by Parliament. As opposed to that view which permeated the speech of my hon. friend in favour of the abstract theory of free trade as against that of protection, I set up this statement, that the framing of a fiscal policy for a country like Canada, which would suit the country at the time it was framed, is a great effort of statesmanship. It is one of the most important, if not the most important, matter which the Parliament of a country has to deal with. From 1873 to 1878, during the time when my hon. friend the leader of the opposition occupied a position in the government of Canada, we find that new conditions had arisen with regard to the industries of the country. Many will say “why were your party not protectionists before that; they were free traders before that.” I admit that many of them were, but the reason of that is to be found in the fact that about that time new conditions began to come into existence on this continent which had never been observed before. About 30 years ago, in 1865, the United States civil war came to a close, and large numbers of men returned from the battlefields, north and south, to their former peaceful pursuits. A vast proportion of the population which had up to that time been engaged in preparing supplies for the army, and in meeting other contingencies arising

from a state of civil war, returned to peaceful avocations, and the United States was compelled to adopt an extremely high tariff, not merely for purposes of protection, but to meet the extraordinary interest charge upon the war debt which they had to assume. This high tariff brought about an unprecedented development of American industries. By the high prices which labour produced, immigrants were drawn to the country in larger numbers than ever before, and in a few years the industrial life of the nation was quickened to an extent which had never been anticipated. That went on until during the seventies the United States found themselves producing more than they could possibly consume, and they commenced to look about them for customers to buy their surplus products. Canada at the time had a low tariff, and her industries were still in the infant stage; it was thus easy for the Americans to dump into Canada such of their products as they did not consume themselves. We all know what the result was. Many, perhaps, might say it was a very good thing for the country, but I think it has been clearly proved that that was not the result. As time went on the Americans resorted to many methods of discrimination. In the matter of sugar they went so far as to grant a rebate on exportations which was actually larger than the duty on imported sugar, and their sugar thus came into Canada displacing that produced by our own refineries. Our sugar industries were ruined, and other industries also suffered. It was during this time that the question of the trade policy of the country forced itself upon our public men. There had not existed up to that time such conditions as were then to be found, and in my opinion that is where the leader of the Liberal party and his friends missed their opportunity. They were then at the head of affairs and had the first choice of policies. Had they been equal to the occasion and furnished to the industries of Canada some measure of protection, they might not have been in opposition as they have been for the past seventeen or eighteen years. The Conservative party, led by the greatest man we have had in this Dominion, and perhaps on this continent, during the past fifty years, Sir John Macdonald, was not slow to grasp the situation. Sir John Macdonald listened to the cry that went up from the farming, manufacturing and other interests of the country, and adopted the