

abroad that our potatoes were diseased, there is a possibility that we would be shut out from the Cuban and West Indian markets as well. It is very important that this matter be taken hold of with energy and determination. If disease there be, it surely cannot be of such a character that it cannot be stamped out.

I see some hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House who want to treat this subject with levity. We cannot raise a question in this House, I am sorry to say, in which the farmers are deeply interested but hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House endeavour to treat it with levity and ridicule. If the manufacturers and the special interests came here, they would not be treated in that way; those who undertook to speak for them would not be so treated. These hon. gentlemen send over a picture which they think contains something that is funny. The little finger of the manufacturers appears to be thicker than the loins of the farmers in Canada, particularly with hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House who laugh so heartily. It is one of the British poets who says that it is the loud laugh that speaks the vacant mind.

This amendment appears to me to be reasonable. It is surely one that will commend itself to the favourable consideration of the Minister of Finance. I cannot for the life of me see any argument against it. The minister did not offer any argument against it last night. He stated that he did not, and I think it was because he had not given the subject any consideration. The amendment merely asks that we take the duty off American potatoes when the United States take the embargo off Canadian potatoes. If they do not take the embargo off, conditions remain as they are, and if they do take it off and allow us to trade with them freely in this article, are we prepared to reciprocate? Surely we are. If the Minister of Finance refuses to accept this amendment, the only conclusion is that this Government is unwilling to allow the farmers the advantage of the United States market for their potatoes. They have set up the fetish of protection, the golden calf, and they are afraid to touch it lest the whole fabric tumble. The Minister of Finance said something to that effect last night. He made this statement:

Mr. Chairman, I take the position that we must negative this resolution as being incon-

[Mr. J. J. Hughes.]

sistent with the fiscal policy which I have announced in the Budget.

No matter what the merits of the particular question may be, no matter what advantage it may give to the farmers of the Maritime provinces, particularly to the farmers of Prince Edward Island, no matter what advantage it may give at certain seasons of the year to the city dwellers in Canada, if it touches the citadel of protection in any way it cannot be accepted by this Government. That is practically what the Minister of Finance said last night. If that is the attitude of the Government it is as well for the farmers of my province at least to know it, and I intend that they shall know it. I see my colleagues from Prince Edward Island here. I would like to know what these gentlemen think upon this subject. They know the advantage of the American market to the farmers of Prince Edward Island if we had a free exchange of potatoes, and I would like to hear them. I presume I shall. I trust that the Minister of Finance will reconsider the subject and will not dismiss it as lightly as he did last night. It ought to receive more consideration than he has given to it.

Mr. JOHN A. BEST (Dufferin): Mr. Chairman, I was delighted to hear the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat (Mr. J. J. Hughes) speaking so strongly in favour of the farmers, who, no doubt, constitute the great majority of the people of the Dominion of Canada. But it is very strange that the business men and lawyers are so much interested in the farmers when the farmers say that these are the men who are raising the price of the produce to the consumer. Yet these middlemen stand up in this House and tell us what they are going to do for the farmers.

There seems to be a combine on the other side of the House to try to catch the farmer and the consumer at the same time. Last night these gentlemen opposite were talking, not in the interests of the farmer but in the interests of the consumer, and they deplored how the consumer had to pay \$5 a barrel for potatoes in the summer, and they declared that if the duty were taken off, he would get them cheaper. But if the consumer gets cheaper potatoes, with the duty off, I would like these gentlemen opposite to tell me how that would affect the price of Canadian potatoes. The hon. gentleman (Mr. J. J. Hughes) seemed to know all about the time that potatoes came