

actual selling value; whereas the estimates brought forward by that gentleman, no doubt perfectly correct, so far as his information went, were based on the estimates furnished him by parties who owned lands, and who were not unnaturally interested in keeping up the price as high as they reasonably could, or who, at any rate, were naturally most reluctant to admit that the value of their lands had materially fallen. Some time ago I had occasion to consult a gentleman of very large experience as to the extent of this depreciation. I do not know a better authority in Ontario, and this is what that gentleman wrote to me with reference to the mode in which the value of farm properties is arrived at:

"No doubt you will have the report of the Ontario Bureau of Industries thrown in your face, in contradiction of the statement as to depreciation in value of farm land, and while I am free to admit that they are computed honestly, probably from the best data obtainable, still as to the value of the farm lands, they are terribly misleading. The number of acres sown in wheat, oats, barley &c., price of cleared and wild per acre, &c., are probably returned complete, and from the average of this return the tables are computed. A farmer can tell exactly how many horses, cattle and sheep he has, also how many acres he has in wheat, oats or barley, but if he gives the price of his land, he invariably puts it down at the highest price he has ever been offered, or bases his figures on some price generally that has been paid in his neighborhood, adding for improvements he has made in the meantime at cost, hence the misleading character of that portion of the statistics. I have gone over these sheets carefully in townships where I knew the parties and the farms well, and found that it was generally the best, most independent and enterprising farmers who made returns, and while they gave the other statistics correctly, they invariably placed their land at a great deal more than it is worth, and we find the same thing occurs in applications for loans."

Now, I am very sorry to say that in a great number of cases it is patent to all who have had experience, that were you to place any considerable number of farms in the market at the present time, it would be quite impossible to obtain purchasers for them at almost any price. Sir, cases, and many cases, have been named to me, and details given, where expensive farm buildings had been erected and improvements made, when it was impossible to obtain for the whole farm more than the cost of the farm buildings and the fencing. Now, this need not surprise anybody who will fairly consider the situation, because it is perfectly well known to every practical agriculturist, that within the last few years there has been an enormous reduction in the price of all farm produce of every kind and description whatever. The actual margin of profit has almost entirely disappeared. It stands to reason, therefore, that the value of land must fall, and the onus would rather be on those who maintain that, under such circumstances, land could preserve the value it had a few years ago. But here again, I say to hon. gentlemen opposite, if you dispute my statements, if you deny the conclusions I have arrived at, it rests with yourselves to have this matter properly tested and examined into. Go to those impartial parties who are likely to know what the result has been. Consult your registrars, consult your sheriffs, consult your county judges, consult your assessors, and I believe that, without exception, they will bear me out in saying that there has been an enormous depreciation in the value of farm lands, in the Province of Ontario at any rate, and that I am well within the mark when I say that,

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within the last nine or ten years, the average reduction in value of farms in Ontario is not less—I am sorry to say, is probably more on the average—than \$10 an acre. If you choose to multiply the amount of farm lands in Ontario by \$10 an acre you will arrive at something like an approximate estimate of the total depreciation in the value of farm property in that Province. For other Provinces I will not pretend to speak. Hon. gentlemen are here present who are better qualified than I am to say how things have turned out in their part of the country. And, lest I should be accused by any of those hon. gentlemen of venturing to speak without authority for the farmers of Ontario, I would like to call your attention and that of the House to certain resolutions which were recently adopted at a meeting of the Ontario Central Farmers' Institute, where delegates from fifty constituencies, I am told, were present. These gentlemen, with four dissentient votes out of about 120, passed the following resolutions, which, probably, the Finance Minister has never heard of, because, if he had, he would not have ventured on the assertions he has made to-day:

"The Central Farmers' Institute of Ontario do memorialise the Dominion Government that:—

"Whereas, we consider the present high tariff is very injurious to the agricultural interests, making what we buy proportionately dearer than the products we sell; and,

"Whereas, the present high tariff has given rise to the combine system, by which competition is to a great extent prevented; and,

"Whereas, the agricultural interest is suffering under serious depression and unable to bear the strain occasioned by the tariff and the combine system aforesaid, and, as the agricultural interests represent the large majority of the population; that,

"Therefore, this, the Central Institute, do respectfully ask the Government to reduce the tariff on articles of prime necessity to the farmer, such as iron, steel, coal, cottons, woollens, rubbers, sugars, corn and salt, to such an extent as to relieve the agriculturist of the unequal burden under which he is now laboring."

And to-night we had the response of the First Minister and his colleague to their address, to their reasonable and modest request that a portion of the great surplus, at the disposal of the Government, should be used for the relief of the farmers of Canada, by the declaration that there should be greater duties on iron, and there should be greater duties on paints, which are largely used by agriculturists, that there should be greater duties on woollens, and that these duties should be so arranged, by virtue of the imposition of large specific duties, that they should press with special severity on the poorest class of the community, who necessarily consume the class of goods on which a specific duty works the greatest injustice.

Mr. SPROULE. Such as paints for rail fences.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. If my hon. friend would speak louder I would attend to him, but I cannot always hear what he says. I do not desire to pass him by. It has been argued on the floor of this House, and it has been argued by the press, subsidised and other, in favor of hon. gentlemen, that precisely the same state of things exists in the United States. It is true. Precisely the same state of things does exist in the United States, only rather worse than here, because they have had a protective system rather longer.

Mr. BOWELL. That is what you want to join.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. No; I do not want to join them.