

observed. The first tariff of confederation was a moderate tariff, and although a year or two later it became necessary to change the duties somewhat in the interests of revenue, there was no substantial departure from the terms of what I have described as the unwritten treaty with the lower provinces. It was not indeed until 1876, or about that time, that the question of a high tariff gravely occupied the attention of this House. True, in 1870 or 1871 the question of protection had been mooted, and a policy of protection, as respects a limited list of articles, had been agreed upon temporarily, but that policy was abandoned in 1871, and from that time down to the moment at which the Government of the late Sir John Macdonald retired from office, no further movement was made in the direction of what was called a protective tariff. It was not until the Government of Sir John Macdonald had been defeated and Mr. Mackenzie was in power, it was not until a period of great depression had come upon the country—and not upon Canada alone but the world at large—it was not until there were conditions more calculated to make people anxious in Canada, as well as elsewhere, as to the business prospects of the country, that any serious movement took place in Canada for the establishment of a protective tariff. Now, it is well known that the manufacturers came to Mr. Mackenzie between 1874 and 1878, and proposed to him that he should increase the tariff. No doubt they thought that they were correct, no doubt they believed that prosperity would result from the adoption of a protective system, and, therefore, desired that Mr. Mackenzie should yield to their views. But we all know that Mr. Mackenzie refused to do so. Now, I believe that Sir John Macdonald was up to that time as good a free trader as Mr. Mackenzie. I have seen no evidence that he ever deliberately adopted the policy of protection with the intention of adhering to it as the fixed policy and principle of the Conservative party. On the contrary, I believe that he was tempted to yield to it for the moment by the clamour that was raised by the protectionists, and the belief that he might be returned to power. But if we refer back to the discussions of these days, we will find that in the resolutions submitted and the speeches made by Sir John Macdonald and his followers, the whole question of protection was treated in a very gingerly way indeed, and the resolutions for which the Conservative party voted at that time were resolutions which might mean almost anything. They were protectionist, it is true, but the platform was one which enabled a Minister of the Crown to go down to the maritime provinces and offer himself for election on it as the champion free trader. I mention this to show that the policy of protection was not deliberately adopted even by the Conservative

party, but was the outgrowth of political difficulties in which the leaders of the Conservative party, I think erroneously, permitted themselves to be led away from the old faith; and I venture to say now that, in the light of history, many Conservatives of this country look back upon that departure with regret. Though they supported the National Policy believing it would be instrumental in developing the best interests of the country, they will admit to-day that it was a policy of disappointment, and that, in all probability, Canada would have prospered more if she had adhered to the policy of a low tariff.

I have pointed out that the Conservative party adopted the policy of protection at a time of considerable depression, when there was too much disposition, I am afraid, on the part of the people to take up any rostrum which seemed to give a promise of a better state of things. But we may well ask ourselves to-day what were the inducements that were held out to the people to accept that policy? I shall not detain the House by going through all the predictions which were made and the expectations which were created, but some of the things which occurred at that time may well be mentioned. One of the most important and one of the most common arguments used was that a protective tariff, though probably not a very good thing in itself as a permanent policy, might be a good policy to adopt temporarily. If you will give, they said, these infant industries protection, they will, in a very short time, become strong and vigorous and be able to stand alone without protection. Well, Mr. Speaker, we are able to deal with that argument to-day in the light of experience. We have had eighteen years of pretty high protection carried into effect under conditions as favourable as could be wished for in Canada, and what has been the result? These infant industries have grown bigger and their voice stronger, but their voice still cries out that if the nursing bottle be taken from them, they will immediately perish from the face of the earth. And so we find that the prediction made then that the policy of protection was only intended to encourage infant industries, and that for a very short time, has not been realized.

Then we had another strong temptation to adopt the National Policy. There was a very strong desire among the people for a reciprocity treaty with the United States, and hon. gentlemen opposite thought they could do nothing better than use the reciprocity cry to help them to make the National Policy acceptable. The hon. leader of the Opposition (Sir Charles Tupper) went down to the maritime provinces, where the idea of reciprocity was very agreeable to the people, and gave the electors there the assurance, with all the vigour we know he is capable of, that if they would accept the National Policy, in two years he would