

and as I see the Ministerial benches are now pretty well filled, I will do so. There is a telegram published in the Montreal "Gazette," dated London, Ont., which states :

A new telegraphic order was received by the customs-house authorities here, this morning, to continue working under the old tariff.

I should like to ask some member of the Government who is present how that is. Is the Postmaster General aware of it ?

The POSTMASTER GENERAL (Mr. Mullock). I know nothing about the telegram, nor do I know as a matter of fact what instructions may have been sent by the Controller of Customs to his officers ; but speaking of the policy of the Government, interpreting it in the light of the tariff introduced, I am quite satisfied no such instructions have been sent to any officer in Canada. It is quite inconsistent with our tariff policy.

Mr. DAVIN. The only thing is this, it would be hard to find anything inconsistent with the tariff policy, because it is consistent only in its inconsistency.

I should like to show the House what were the expectations of the people of this country. In the autumn session of 1896 a committee of this House printed a very important report. On that committee were the hon. member for Eastern Assiniboia, the hon. member for Simcoe, the hon. member for South Huron, the hon. member for West Bruce and the hon. member for Bellechasse ; and this is what they said :

The fall in prices in articles which the farmer has to buy has not kept pace with what may be described as the slump in prices in the products of the farm on which the farmer has to depend for his living, nor with the decline in other parts of the world, where legislative and artificial means have not been enforced to maintain high prices. Nor is this result to be wondered at, for, while the agriculturist—the price of whose products is regulated by the price at the port of export—is thus brought into competition with the rest of the world, the classes he has to purchase from have been protected against foreign competition and been thus enabled to maintain their prices unaffected by that which, after all is said and done, is the ultimate factor in settling values.

The committee, therefore, trusts that, while every regard consistent with the principle of reforming the tariff on a revenue basis may be had to existing industries, commercial and manufacturing, yet the mistake of suffering things to remain as they are, fearful of the consequences that a reform on the lines indicated may entail on established industries, should not be made.

I call the attention of the House to this very important statement made by the committee, and I think all the hon. gentlemen I have named sit on the Government side of the House. The report continues :

If such a policy be pursued, it will, as the committee thinks, be at the expense of, and a great disappointment to, the agriculturists of Canada, who, while desiring no unnecessary harm to other classes or interests, are yet anxious that

Mr. DAVIN.

their rights and claims should not be lost sight of in the anxiety, perhaps not unnatural, not to interfere with the so-called vested rights of industries established under a system of tariff legislation that on the whole has been productive of ten-fold more injury than of benefit to the community. In a word, the committee think that the tariff should be readjusted, notwithstanding the loss inevitable that must follow from the recurrence to a wiser system.

Will the House note this statement ? That is the opinion of the member for Simcoe and the hon. member for South Huron and those other hon. gentlemen. They go on to say :

This, and this alone, is all that the committee can suggest as a means of lowering the price of the commodities which the agriculturist has to buy.

The hon. Prime Minister after he was raised to his present high position, speaking in one of the constituencies of Quebec, said : We cannot raise the prices of the commodities you have to sell, but we can lower the prices of those things you have to buy. And he promised to do so.

I have here a statement of what the farmers of Manitoba and the North-west require, which was laid before the Tariff Commission when they were at Winnipeg. Mr. James Fleming was the spokesman of a very large delegation of farmers. The second resolution they submitted to the Finance Minister and the Controller of Customs reads as follows :—

2. That agricultural implements, farm machinery and all tools used on the farm, binder twine, fence wire, lumber, nails, and building material, coal oil and fruit be free, and that the duty on salt, cotton and woollen clothing be materially reduced.

I showed before dinner that there is 35 per cent duty on much of what the farmer uses. I showed there is no change whatever in the duty on implements. I pointed out that there was only 1 cent taken off coal oil. When I mentioned salt, the hon. member for one of the Hurons said—and he must have known that I was speaking of dutiable salt—that I was wrong in saying that the bulk of dutiable salt came from the United States. I have looked at the report of the Minister of Trade and Commerce and the report of the Controller of Customs, and I find I was quite right. The great bulk of dutiable salt comes from the United States. The third resolution was as follows :—

3. That the high protective tariff has very materially restricted commerce with Great Britain, which is the country we look to above all others for our markets, and has greatly retarded the settlements of this province.

Mr. Fleming referred to a number of duties that inflicted great injustice on the people of Manitoba, and then he spoke of the coal oil duty, and said :