

this afternoon, referred to the fact that in his province the amount invested in the boot and shoe business was no less a sum than \$32,000,000, and that protection was necessary to keep that business alive. I want to impress upon you members of the Progressive party that in his address this afternoon, which was delivered in a very impressive manner indeed, the Minister of Justice, while he did not mention the word "protection," so far as I can recall it, from start to finish, did say frankly and freely that for twenty-five years or more he had been firmly convinced that the tariff policy pursued by Sir Wilfrid Laurier's government, with the present Minister of Finance in charge of the exchequer, was the correct one for Canada to hold to to-day. None of you who have given any consideration to this subject can fail to be aware of the fact that the customs tariff from 1896 to 1911 was absolutely a protective tariff; just such a protective tariff—for it was almost unchanged during that period—as that which prevailed while the predecessors of the Laurier government were in office. It is true that at the very end of that period they made an appeal to the country on a policy of reciprocity in natural products with the United States, and the verdict of the people was so overwhelmingly against the proposal that they went down to almost complete collapse. In no part of Canada was reciprocity a more vital issue than it was in the constituency that I represent. In no part of Canada was the danger so freely seen to the great industries, which, indeed, are our basic industries there, and the result was that the then Conservative candidate, Hon. Martin Burrell, was returned by one of the largest majorities ever received by a candidate in the West. The people of that constituency, whose bread and butter were at stake on that occasion, were fully seized of the gravity of the situation as it affected them.

Now, let us look for a few moments at this fruit-growing industry. We have heard to-day a very distressful tale indeed from several speakers in the group to my left, and I am only too fully aware that what they said was true. The conditions which have confronted the farmer of the western plains during the last two or three years are all quite as depicted by my hon. friends. But I venture to suggest that some of those difficulties and distresses were due to conditions relating to climate and soil; not all of them, surely, were

directly or indirectly traceable to the tariff policy of the country. However that may be, here is the condition of affairs in my constituency.

We have, as I say, invested in the orchard business about \$40,000,000, and our natural market is the prairie country of the West. In 1912, 1913, 1914 and 1915, when the orchard business was just beginning to get upon its feet, we were met by this condition of affairs: we were trying to ship apples across the mountains for sale

to you people on the plains. Our 10 p.m. cost of production in those days was between ninety cents and one dollar per box; to-day it has risen to \$1.50 per box. We found that the great apple-producing sections of the two states lying to our south—Washington and Oregon, and, to some extent Idaho and Montana—were producing one hundred boxes of apples to our one; had established trade in a large chain of populous cities stretching at least to the Mississippi river and in a great many instances further east, where they could sell their "Fancy" and "Extra Fancy" brands of fruit at a profitable figure. They were anxious to dispose of what they call their "C" variety at almost any price they could get for it; accordingly they began sending this fruit into the Prairie provinces in such quantities and at such prices that stark ruin—no other word can properly designate it—stark ruin stared the orchardists of Okanagan and other sections of Yale in the face. Apples were sent on consignment from Washington and Oregon to the prairie markets and sold at forty cents a box when the cost of production in those states was about ninety cents. Was there any possibility under those circumstances for our orchardists to compete? Could they, indeed, continue in existence in the face of that condition? Well, we speedily saw that we had either to give up the business or get some measure of protection, that would save us from disaster and ruin. Mind you, the orchard business is not like any other. When a man starts an orchard he has to buy expensive land in the first place; he has to make a large annual outlay for water to irrigate it, and he has to wait anywhere from five to eight years for the trees to attain maturity before he can look for any return. And if he has an unprofitable season he cannot go into some other line of agriculture; he cannot change his crop; he has to depend upon the product of his apple or plum or peach or cherry trees.