

deal with this system of trade restriction, and the hopes of every Progressive member were raised in the belief that the Liberal party intended to be true to its own platform and principles, which every one of my colleagues was prepared to help the government put into effect. But the subject is not mentioned in the present Speech, which I take to mean that in the opinion of the government and their supporters the tariff, as it now stands, is as perfect as it can be made.

We are promised this session a bill to safeguard the interests of consumers and producers from the undue enhancement of prices or unfair restriction of trade by combines, mergers, trusts and monopolies. I confess, Mr. Speaker, that somehow I have failed to become enthusiastic over the foreshadowing of such legislation, seeing that the government by one amendment to the tariff act last session completely delivered every consumer and producer over to the tender mercies of a skilfully organized minority, composed of these very combines, trusts, mergers and monopolies which are now threatened to be controlled. In fact, I do not think there is a member in this House so gullible—not even a Progressive—as to believe that the present government can by any further legislation control the machinations of these trusts, mergers, combines and monopolies. Since the session of 1909-10, when the right hon. Prime Minister, then Minister of Labour in Sir Wilfrid Laurier's cabinet, introduced a bill for this purpose, which was duly enacted, we have seen that legislation fail in its object; indeed, that very same year the Grocers' Guild and other combines openly laughed at and defied the law, and from that time forward such organizations have, according to their interpretation of the statute, evaded its provisions in a perfectly legal way. What this country suffers from at the present time is the iniquitous system of the distribution of goods which is a product of protection which makes the cost of everything we need out of line with the prices of what we produce.

In defiance of any anti-combine bill there was then forged the last link in a perfect chain of combines which, so far as the consumers of this country are concerned, encircles the whole Dominion, and still remains unbroken. It is not new legislation that we need to control combinations that are restricting trade and preventing competition and legitimate enterprise, but the elimination of the legislation now on our statute books that is responsible for these very combines and mergers formed to restrain trade and unduly

enhance the price of everything that we need to eat or wear. It is not possible to enact any new legislation to achieve that end that would not be simply a joke on our statute books. It would be a travesty on the intelligence of the electors of this country to tell them that we were, by a new act of legislation, going to control the profiteers and at the same time leave untouched the very legislation which has given them that power, and under which they are so completely organized for their vicious work of exploitation. They have been aided rather than repressed, in this, I know, by a succession of governments for many years.

I think the intentions of the present Liberal government in this respect are plainly seen in an amendment to the Customs Act artfully put through parliament in the closing days of last session—an amendment of which even the Minister of Customs himself declared he did not know how far-reaching the effects would be. It was an amendment that entirely destroyed the right of the purchaser to have the goods valued at the actual cost plus a reasonable profit, and substituted a valuation dictated by the minister or by the producer of such goods in Canada—goods which are already enhanced in price by a protective tariff, and which pass through the hands of several combines, mergers, and trusts, operating defiantly in restraint of trade. Surely that is a fine basis for valuation, from the profiteer's point of view. It is an amendment that destroys entirely the whole tariff schedule as it stands as to rates of duties to be levied, and places the power of valuation entirely in the hands of the Minister of Customs or others who may be interested in the very line of goods he is called upon to value. In my opinion it is an amendment that is aimed directly at the trade activities of the co-operative companies, of agricultural and city workers, in their endeavours to keep down the cost of production on the farms and the cost of living in the cities, to a figure commensurate with world prices and the lower trend of wages. It is an amendment that at one stroke forms into one great combine every manufacturing and distributing concern in the country. The anti-dumping clause as it stands, puts the trade of the whole Dominion on the basis of the company-store system, and divorces the worker entirely from any interest he should have in the country. I think it certainly establishes a man's right to rebel. And all this by the Liberal party with a free trade plank in their platform!

Only a short time ago I heard one of the most prominent Liberals in our province de-