

proposition, that it was possible to increase our collective wealth by increasing our taxes. I beg leave to tell the hon. gentleman that I regard such a proposition as about the ne plus ultra of folly in a country like Canada. When the hon. gentleman is able to pour water into a sieve and keep it there, when the hon. gentleman is able to leap from one of these buildings and sustain himself in mid-air, by grasping his waistband, when the hon. gentleman can take snow in his hand and hold it before the fire without its melting; then, and not until then, will the hon. gentleman increase the collective wealth of the community by increasing their taxes. Sir, we do not look for grapes from thorns and we do not look for figs from thistles, but we had better do that than look for prosperity to a policy, the very key-note of which is to enrich one or two special classes at the expense of the great bulk of the community. I tell the hon. gentleman that his Government and his policy may indeed displace wealth—that they have done to a large extent—but they are helpless and powerless to create it. Then, Sir, the friends of the hon. gentleman, and I think the hon. gentleman himself, although he alluded to it but lightly, gave us to understand that because protection had brought prosperity, as he thought, to the United States, therefore that protection would bring prosperity to Canada also. I never heard that argument used by anybody without putting down the man who used it either as a charlatan who does know better, but who desires to delude the people, or as a man who is utterly and hopelessly ignorant of the very primary geographical conditions in which this country is placed. I have said often, and I repeat it here—because the hon. gentleman has made it necessary for me to go into some details in dealing with these general propositions—I repeat, that if an economist were called upon to select two countries in one of which the protective system would do the maximum of mischief, and another in which it would do the minimum of mischief, he would select as the one which was best able to bear a protective system without injury, the United States of North America, and he would also select as the one in which a protective system would assuredly do the maximum of mischief to the whole inhabitants of the country, the federation of this Dominion. In the United States you have met together every condition which would counteract the evil effects of a high protective system. You have a huge country, containing a population equal to two first-rate European nations, producing every article, I believe, which any nation can require to produce, having every variety of climate, from the tropic to the pole, and enjoying in itself a vast and most perfect system of free trade among twenty-five or thirty nations called states. You have, on this side of the border, a group of countries se-

parated from each other by physical obstacles of a very formidable kind separated from each other by large tracts of inhospitable country, producing almost identically the same articles; not a homogeneous people by any means, with a very small population, comparatively speaking; and, in one word, you have combined in Canada every possible combination of circumstances which can make a protective system a huge and vicious mistake. The hon. the Finance Minister and his friends are in the habit of telling us that we need not complain, forsooth, of the amount of the taxes they levy upon us for the benefit of the manufacturers, because, he told us, the manufacturers are now able to produce in Canada as cheaply as in any other country. I doubt if a more impudent claim was ever advanced. If they are able to produce as cheaply in Canada as anywhere else, what right or what need have they of protection at all? But the fact is, that as to many articles, it is impossible, 'In rerum natura,' that you can produce them in Canada at all as cheaply as you can in other countries. I take issue in the most distinct fashion with the hon. gentleman on that question. I may tell him that Canada at present is essentially an agricultural country, and next to that, it is a mining, fishing and lumbering country, and while I am not in any respect disposed to depreciate the great importance of the manufacturing industries that exist, neither can I for one moment allow the hon. gentleman to mislead this House or to mislead the people into supposing that Canada has any peculiar aptitudes for a great many manufactures. There are certain manufactures which may develop naturally and fairly here, and if so, Sir, they will need no coddling by a protective tariff or in any other way. If our manufactures need anything for the purpose of their full and free development, what they need, and what the best of our manufacturers know that they need, is a larger market than they at present possess. I am well aware, Sir, that it is the habit of hon. gentlemen opposite to support these false contentions by impudently claiming for themselves, in the first place, the benefit of all the natural improvement which must take place in a great country like this, and in the second place, of claiming the benefit of all these wonderful scientific discoveries which from day to day, I might also say from hour to hour, are cheapening the process of manufacturing. Sir, science, I grant you, has partly undone the enormous mischief that protection has caused; but, Sir, what protection does is this: it intercepts the compensation which is due to our farmers and the other classes I have named. The prices of all their manufactures, their wheat, their beef, every article that they produce, have been falling heavily, and still more heavily, from year to year, until this year, as the hon. Minister admitted in his speech, the prices of most of our cereals have touched the lowest figure known for