

The "Times" is supposed to be a tolerably firm believer in the principles of English free trade as intelligently applied to any colonial condition. But I may quote another English writer who is even more marked as an exponent of free trade principles. I allude to Lord Farrer, whose free trade views will hardly be questioned by any one. In a recent pamphlet Lord Farrer says :

The colonies must, for some time at any rate, raise revenue by duties, and these duties can hardly fail to be, to some extent, protective.

Again, no reasonable free trader wishes to see a system of protection which has been in force for years, and under which industries of various kinds have grown up, abolished at a single blow. Such a step would be both unjust and unwise.

What free traders desire is a much more moderate and safer course.

They wish to see the colonies abandon protection as a theory, and gradually reduce the most obnoxious of their present protective duties. This would probably, by increasing importation itself, increase revenue, and make further reductions possible. Gradually the colonies would thus approach, and ultimately attain, the state of things which obtains in the United Kingdom, without undue sacrifice of revenue, and without injustice to existing interests. But it is out of the question to do this except cautiously and by degrees, as indeed it was done in this country. This is what we may hope for under the new regime in Canada.

These views have a practical bearing on the question of how far we may go in the direction of tariff reform. I have sometimes heard the expression used, that the manufacturers had vested rights in these matters. I wish to protest against such an expression. No manufacturer has any vested right under the National Policy. Every man who invested a dollar under the National Policy did so with his eyes wide open to certain important facts. He was well aware that from the beginning down to the end, the National Policy was condemned by one of the great political parties in Canada. He was well aware that every effort had to be put forth by governmental influence, and such influences as the manufacturers themselves are well aware of, in order to obtain from the public an apparent endorsement of that policy. I would be justified in saying that at no time from the beginning of this question to the present day, has there ever been a substantial majority of the people of Canada, looking at the question on its merits, who believed in the principle of high protection. Accidental circumstances doubtless brought about the election of a majority of members who supported that policy, but at all events I can say, that from the beginning of the discussion to the end, the Liberal party of Canada—always a great party, nearly always one-half the people, and in more recent days very much more than one-half the people—placed themselves upon record as condemning the principles of the National Policy.

Now, the manufacturers knew of this, and they must have known that when they put their money into these factories they were taking their risks. There was a speculative element in this whole National Policy business, and the men who play the game and gather in the winnings ought to be prepared, when the turn of the tide comes, to pay the losses and try to look pleasant. Therefore, I say, if it suited the people of Canada, as represented by this Parliament and by this Government, to strike out of the fiscal policy of Canada to-day every vestige of protection, the protective interests would have no right to complain. They had taken their risk, and they should be prepared to abide the consequences. But, Sir, while that would be stern justice, unfortunately there is no disposition on the part of this Government to destroy—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. FOSTER. Scoundrels great and scoundrels small.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. My hon. friends opposite are in such an amiable frame of mind that they venture to applaud before I have finished the sentence. They are very happy in being able to anticipate what we think. I say there is no disposition on the part of this Government to deal with the manufacturing and protected classes in that spirit, although I do submit that if it suited the view of the majority of the people of Canada to adopt a policy which would simply reverse the principle of protection and establish free trade, while it might be and would be a dangerous thing if done at once, so far as the protected interests are concerned, they would have no right whatever to complain. But, Sir, we are dealing with more than the protected interests of the manufacturers. The evil of protection, like most other evils, is wide-reaching in its influences, and it has become so blended and interwoven with the business of Canada that if we should attempt to strike it down to-day, we should do harm not only to the protected interests, which have no claim upon us, but to other interests which are not directly connected with the protected interests. It would be folly not to remember that we are dealing not with the protected manufacturers only, but that the interests of labour have to be considered as well as the interests of capital. We have to remember that the trade of the country is so permeated by this system that, in the matter of banking alone, there are vast interests associated with this question. I hesitate not to say that if we should to-day, by some rash step, do that which some hon. gentlemen say we are bound to do, but which intelligent men know we are not bound to do, and would not do, we would not only break down the manufacturing interests of the