

National Policy to allow the free importation of a raw material which comes into direct competition with the wool chiefly produced in this country. As to the duties on wool in general, the argument has been very unfairly stated by the hon. gentleman opposite, because, as a matter of fact, we do not grow in this country the class of wool the manufacturers require for the finer class of goods; consequently it would be quite right to admit that class of wool into the country free of duty. That is a legitimate part of the National Policy; I admit that. But I know, as a matter of fact, that we are in this country becoming producers of a very fine class of wool, and I think the farmers will have a perfect right to say to the Government—if they are giving protection to other articles of agricultural produce, if they are giving protection to the manufacturer, and if they are giving protection to them by the admission into this country of articles which this country does not produce—we are now producing fine quality of wool, and we therefore ask that the duty shall be put upon the importation of wool which comes into direct competition with our wool. That state of things has not existed hitherto, because the finer class of wools are not produced in this country, but we are very rapidly increasing our growth of a class of wool which, to some extent, does come into competition with this fine class of wool, and that brings up the question of the duties on wool in a manner which it has never occupied hitherto in this country. But without entering into that question, which is entirely distinct from the present one, I do not think that the Finance Minister or the Minister of Customs have shown any ground whatever for allowing these woollen rags to come into this country in direct competition, as they must necessarily do, with our low grade wools which are most generally produced here. I think the proposition is entirely inconsistent with the agricultural interest as it is affected by the National Policy, and I for one am altogether opposed to placing that article upon the free list.

Mr. IRVINE. Of course, the Finance Minister has always been the friend of the farmer and of the agriculturist, and of course he has done this in the interest of the farmers. It is very well known that during this last year, if I mistake not, 6,000,000 pounds of foreign wool have been imported free of duty, while we exported only 1,500,000 pounds of our home grown wool. Now, if I am correctly informed, a large portion of the wool imported into this country is of the very class that we raise here, and that wool, according to our Trade and Navigation Returns, which is imported into this country, gives about 20 cents a pound. Do you want shoddy cheaper than that? Do you want woollen rags cheaper than that? Would our home grown wool make clothing at the price shoddy is quoted at? With reference to the hon. gentleman who has just spoken, I imagine he is not a practical farmer.

Mr. O'BRIEN. As a matter of fact he is.

Mr. IRVINE. Then all I can say is that if he is a practical farmer he has certainly shown to me that he knows very little about sheep-raising. There is nothing to prevent the Canadian farmer from raising the finer wool sheep; there is nothing to prevent the Spanish merino from coming into competition with the long wool Lincoln or Cotswold. The finer wool sheep are the hardest, and there is nothing to prevent any class of wool being grown in this country. It is well known that the Government put forth the plea that this change is to benefit the Canadian farmer. But it does not benefit the laboring man, it does not benefit the poor man, it benefits only the rich man who wants a fine garment made out of fine wool, and, therefore he has fine wool brought into this country free of duty. We find that practical men have given up sheep-raising from the fact that there is no profit in raising sheep at the present time.

Mr. O'BRIEN.

Mutton has gone down, and wool is comparatively worthless. When you can import wool at 20 cents a pound, just what is reckoned in the Trade and Navigation Returns, there is no profit for the Canadian farmer in raising it. And yet this hon. gentleman poses as the friend of the farmer. Sir, he is the enemy of the farmer, the worst enemy we ever had. He taxes everything that the farmer consumes and gives him no protection on what he raises. I defy any hon. gentleman to say that the farmer has one iota of protection. You will not protect him when you can. You could protect him in the article of wool, but you have refused to do so. It is a wonder to me that hon. gentlemen should be so brassy as to stand up and declare that they have protected the farmer. Why, you are the worst enemy the farmer ever had. Your National Policy has done him the greatest injury. You have given him no protection upon any article that he raises. Why, Mr. Chairman, an hon. gentleman stood up on the other side of the House the other day—he was a lawyer and you do not expect anything practical from a lawyer—

Mr. IVES. That is pretty hard on the leader of the Opposition:

Mr. IRVINE. If you want to find a man of common sense you have got to go outside the legal profession. But the hon. gentleman—I have forgotten his constituency—stated that the farmer had protection upon barley. Well, Sir, the people of this country exported last year 5,000,000 or 6,000,000 bushels of barley—I speak from memory—and there are a few bushels of barley imported into British Columbia; and I ask him how the Canadian farmer gets protection upon his barley? The Government gives the farmer protection upon an article that he is exporting. Why, it is the greatest piece of folly. No person but a lawyer would be so lost to shame as to make such a statement. And now, Mr. Chairman, to help the farmer, the Government are going to put woollen rags on the free list.

Mr. O'BRIEN. I would just like to let the hon. gentleman know that there are people in this House who know a little about farming, besides himself, and who know a little about the woollen business as well as he does. I know perfectly well, as every farmer does, that we can grow merino wool in this country, but for other reasons, apart altogether from the quality of the wool, it does not pay to raise it, because the price of wool would not make it worth while. The hon. gentleman might understand, when I put the case, that it was, to some extent, in favor of his view, because I say that we are rapidly coming to grow fine wool which does, to some extent, come into competition with the imported fine wool. I think the time will come when the farmers will have a right to ask that a duty be imposed upon fine wool. I know that we can grow the finest wool in this country, but it will not pay us to do so. As to the question of these woollen rags, I think they come directly into competition with the coarser wools grown here, which many of the farmers find it most profitable to raise.

Mr. MILLS. The hon. gentleman says that by-and-by the time may come when it may be proper, in order to carry out the National Policy, to impose a duty upon fine wool. His statement is practically this, that fine wool sheep may be raised by the farmers of Canada. After they have gone into fine wool growing and it has become an important industry of the country, and has grown up without any protection, then it will be the duty of the Government to give it protection. When it shows it can subsist alone, then it is to receive protection. Well, Sir, these hon. gentlemen stated that their object was to give better prices to the agricultural population for all the articles which they can produce. Now it will be quite possible, if these gentlemen were to put a