

that there are very few Robbs. As a Liberal of the old school, I hail with frank gladness the fact that this particular budget takes a practical step away from the device and the idol of high protection in this country. In my view and according to my teaching, customs tariff is nothing but a tax. It is as surely a tax as a disease is a tax upon one's physical strength, just as surely as in the time of the Bible and ever since we have had the unwelcome presence of the tax-gatherer in one form or another. I have no doubt that to-day the overwhelming mass of the people of Canada accept as a maxim the fact that the customs tariff is a tax.

If we go back to the year 1878, we find a time when a young politician came upon the horizon, and a time when commercial depression was to some extent overspreading the whole world. We were then even a younger nation than we are now. In the throes of those dull and slack times the people were in a mood to listen to something new, and the man who afterwards became Sir John A. Macdonald painted a picture which predicted that villages would spring into towns and towns into cities, and that the very music and hum of industry and a perpetually balanced life between the urban and the rural population would obtain. It is too bad that just then too many Canadians forgot the wholesome axiom that the customs tariff was after all a tax. But now, after almost fifty years of an experience, which has been disappointing to say the least, I think that the man who to-night would come forward and dispute the proposition that a customs tariff is a tax would be in that position where he would find that none were so poorly equipped with economic knowledge as to do him reverence.

How has this fallacy of protection been supported by its own sub-fallacies for so many years? Because there are a few clearly defined fallacies which have been kept alive. One of the first is the very fallacy which was born under the promise of Sir John A. Macdonald himself that it would be of brief duration, and that it would be removed when once the manufacturers had ceased to be any longer infants and babes in their career. There is no doubt that that promise was made and that it is historic; and in that very promise we can see that at that time this astute young politician, as he then was, did perceive that throughout Canada there were those who well knew that the customs tariff was only a tax, and to placate them he made this promise that the burden would be of brief

duration. We know that that promise has not been fulfilled. We know that the fallacy consisted of a carelessness in allowing such a condition as that to go on, forgetting that once a protected beneficiary obtained a hold under the device and the advantage of the tariff, the beneficiaries would fight to the last gasp to retain that hold, as the hon. members on your immediate left, Mr. Speaker, are fighting at this particular stage.

Another fallacy—and I refer to it only briefly—is the fact that in the semi-sacred name of loyalty time and time again this policy of high protection was allowed to live, on occasions when, in 1891 and again in 1911 at least, there was a fair opportunity to largely do away with it, so that we might have unhampered trade with our great neighbours to the south. Again it is difficult to see just the connection between the theory that to lower the customs tariff here would mean any lessening of our devoted ties to the Old Land; but that fallacy seemed to be very pronounced at that time. Allied with that we have the fallacy that we should not trade too freely with our border nation. We have been told—though we have nothing but the snow, the ice and the Eskimo in the North with which to seek commerce—that we should not think of trading too freely with our great neighbour to the south, and that there would be a loss of our self-respect in doing so. Again I say that by the fallacy of pretended patriotic duty we were bunched out of a fair share of trade with our neighbours to the south.

There is one more fallacy which occurs to my mind—I do not for a moment say that I have given the whole of them—which has kept the greater fallacy of protection alive and going for such a long while. That is the fallacy that if you help the secondary industries of the country, no matter how prematurely, no matter how ridiculously, you thereby help the initial and primary industries of the country and the consumers in general. It is especially held up to view that if you pile up tariff walls as high as Haman's gallows around the factories and industries, you will thereby provide markets for all the agricultural interests of this great and diversified country. It seems to me that those who come forth as bargaining orators with such a proposition as that have a very heavy burden of proof against themselves, because at this particular time they do not dispute that if you crowd protection upon these secondary industries, you will produce higher prices for what has to be bought by those engaged in primary industries and by