

now proposes to take away every vestige of protection on these articles, and make them free between the United States and Canada and a good many other countries as well. That is the charge which the farmers of this country have against the right hon. gentleman and his government.

A very large deputation waited on the government a few days ago—a deputation representing hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in the fruit and vegetable growing industries of Canada. They came here with their policy, and they said that they had already placed that policy before the right hon. gentleman in a resolution many months before. They told him in a long telegram from their association which was meeting in Toronto, some months before, what they required from this government, should there be any changes in the tariff. But they pointed out that they did not want the tariff as it stands to-day, to be interfered with. When the delegation came down here, it filled this chamber, both the floor of the House and the gallery, and the right hon. gentleman, after hearing all their statements, said: Oh, it is a pity you did not come earlier, but you are too late now. I should like to know if that was a fair answer. Might I call attention to the question which I put the right hon. gentleman in this House before this large delegation came:

Mr. BLAIN. I desire to ask the Prime Minister whether or not serious consideration will be given to any special interest in Canada that may be affected by the proposed reciprocity arrangement should it become law? In the county I have the honour to represent there is a very strong feeling in respect to these matters. Throughout the western part of Ontario, at the present moment, large sums of money are being subscribed to send delegations to the government to explain the position of specific interests that will be affected if these tariff changes become law. Will the government give serious consideration to the representations of these interests if they are made? I may anticipate by saying that a general answer that the government will listen to all complaints of everybody will not be quite sufficient. I want to know if the government will give serious consideration to these matters, or whether it will be better for these gentlemen to stay at home on the ground that this proposal will not be changed?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. We will give most serious consideration to all the interests represented reserving our judgment.

Mr. BLAIN. I anticipated that.

I would ask the right hon. gentleman now, whether, if these men came before the government and presented their views, the government would have any consideration for them. My right hon. friend said in his genial way: Oh, yes, they can come down and present their case, and we will reserve judgment. Why did not the right hon. gentleman say in answer to my question:

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There is no use for any reconsideration, we have signed this agreement and it cannot be broken without the consent of President Taft, and the Congress at Washington. These gentlemen came to Ottawa and presented their views to the government and in reply the government said: Oh, no, this pact is made, and it cannot be altered. And the farmers of this country, the fruit men and vegetable growers of this country, will all feel that the right hon. gentleman did not deal fairly with them. He was not willing to listen to their statement at a time when these changes could be made, but he was willing to allow them to spend large sums of money to come to Ottawa to present their request to him at a time when he knew full well that, no matter what they stated, no changes would be made in this arrangement.

I wish to say a word to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Fisher) whom I do not see in his place. One would have thought that, with all this going on against the farmers of Canada, the Minister of Agriculture would have taken a hand in. We were told, when this government was formed, that we had a real farmer as Minister of Agriculture, an educated farmer. And our farmers were expecting that, when the government proposed to strike off every vestige of protection that the farmers had, at least the Minister of Agriculture would raise some protest and would have said to the government that if others are to have protection the farmers must get their share. The Minister of Agriculture, I presume did not do that. If he did, his voice was not heard, and the pact went on and will become law, I suppose, in the course of a few weeks or a few months.

I wish now to show what the policy of the Liberal party has been with respect to the protection for the farmers. That is an important matter in this discussion. I have already given a partial list of the articles that have been robbed of their protection by this government, all of which are of interest to the farmers of Canada. Perhaps I may be permitted to read first a letter sent to me from the county I have the honour to represent:

Clarkson, Feb. 10, 1911

Richard Blain, Esq.,
Brampton.

Dear Sir,—The fruit and vegetable growers of the Clarkson and Lorne Park district, earnestly request of you as our representative to use all the influence you possibly can with the government, in reference to the carrying out of the reciprocity agreement between Canada and the United States, which is now under consideration.

If this agreement is carried out, it will mean a serious question to us as fruit and vegetable growers, more especially to the smaller growers; it will simply take from us our natural rights as citizens of Canada. Normally speaking, we have amply shown that we can supply our home market with