

This is not the first time that the question of the duties on agricultural implements has been discussed in this house. This has been a moot question at many sessions since 1876. I should like to make one or two references to incidents that have occurred in this house and in committee. In 1876, under the government of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, a committee of the house heard evidence given by Mr. Frost of the Frost and Wood Company, who was asked these questions, to which he gave these answers:

Q. How does the cost of material, rent, and labour in the United States compare with the cost in Canada?

A. The machine we sell at Prescott at \$75, twelve months' credit, is sold by the American manufacturers at Ogdensburg, at \$100.

Q. Still you sell cheaper than the manufacturers in the United States?

A. Yes, 25 per cent. By competition we succeeded in driving them all out of the country.

Apparently the manufacturer of those days was made of sterner stuff than the manufacturer of to-day. John Watson, of Paris, Ontario, also appeared before the committee in 1876. He said:

I have worked up my business, commencing with two men up to what it is to-day, increasing each year. Just as my capital increased I put it in the business.

He was asked this question:

If we adopted a policy which would require protection to iron manufacturers as well as other trades, the effect of that would be injurious to your trade?

To which he replied:

Yes; I think our business is protected just as much as it is necessary to protect it. The American can do nothing in the way of sending their goods here. We can compete with them in any shape, and we produce an article which they cannot excel.

Mr. Watson was then asked this question:

Do you believe the policy of the present government in not protecting home industries is a good policy, allowing the Americans to flood our markets with goods?

This venerable gentleman answered as follows:

I think it is better to do that than to increase the tariff—because the foundation of this country is agriculture and if you increase the tariff for the benefit of manufacturers, of course it must be disadvantageous to the farmers. I have noticed that in a season when the farmers were prosperous, the better position they were in, the better position I was in.

Industry does not seem to have yet learned that lesson in a practical way. We heard from the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Massey) with respect to the Massey-Harris Company. It seems to me that the management of that company has not now the same breadth of vision which it had in 1876.

[Mr. McNiven.]

Mr. MASSEY: I should like to correct the hon. member. I stated very clearly in my remarks that I have had no connection with the Massey-Harris Company for four years, nor has my family.

Mr. McNIVEN (Regina): I did not allege that my hon. friend had any connection with the Massey-Harris Company at the present time. I might go on to say that it is my regret, that it is probably too bad that my hon. friend's family did not continue their connection with that company. Had they done so it might have been better for that company and for the farmers of Canada. Mr. Massey, the president of the company, said in 1876:

We may also add that the existing tariff is satisfactory to us—

It was then fifteen per cent.

—and is sufficient protection. Perhaps even a little less would also be. A still further advance in the tariff would certainly prove adverse to our interests.

That continued until 1883 when, under the national policy, Sir John A. Macdonald increased the tariff to thirty-five per cent, and remained there until 1894 when industrial and agricultural conditions throughout the length and breadth of the country had reached such a stage—had been driven into the doldrums—through the operation of that industrial policy that the tariff was reduced in 1894 to twenty per cent, where it remained until the year 1907. In 1907 the tariff was reduced to 12½ per cent under the British preference, 17½ per cent under the intermediate, and 22½ per cent under the general. May I point out that prominent men in the Conservative party have not always thought as they do now with regard to the duties on agricultural implements, for in the spring of 1911, when he was representing a rural constituency and sitting in opposition, the Right Hon. Mr. Meighen moved in this house a resolution in these words:

That in the opinion of this house a substantial reduction in the import duties on agricultural implements is now due the agriculturists of Canada and is in just accord with the true end of a protective tariff.

Enlarging upon that motion, Mr. Meighen used this language:

Now, sir, what are the manufacturers of agricultural implements enabled to do? They are able, under this tariff, to exact a higher price than they could exact if the tariff were lower. I do not say that a reduction will, to any very enormous extent, affect the price; I believe it will materially, and I think it will render some relief to, particularly, the farmers of the west, many of whom, notwithstanding any statements that have been made