

I am quite aware that perhaps the hon. gentleman who made the enquiry, as well as other hon. members, may be extreme in their views regarding free-trade; but I had hardly supposed that this was at present a point in controversy. I imagined certainly that the initial difficulties incident to the establishment of manufactures in a young country situated as ours is, would appal anyone if we had a system of free-trade, pure and simple.

If then, I am correct in the belief that some measure of protection must be granted in order to make these enterprises successful, the amount to be granted comes into question; and I venture to assert that it is impossible for any man, I do not care how conversant he may be with theories, or how enlightened he may be, to elaborate in his closet and propound a tariff which, evolved by any system of (*a priori*) reasoning shall be adapted to the changing exigencies of a country like this. Any tariff devised must be experimental, it must be tentative, it cannot rest upon pure, abstract principles, it cannot be procrustean; it ought not to be such as will compel the varying industries and conditions of the country to conform to certain fixed rules, but rather a tariff which will yield to our changing necessities, and conditions. Whether protection should equal ten or fifteen, or twenty, or twenty-five per cent. is I assume, a matter to be tested; and in this manner alone can it be determined. Our tariff when prepared, gave a fair degree of protection to manufactures; but it now appears, if the evidence by which we are surrounded is to be credited, as well as the testimony of those most interested, that in consequence of the fierce competition to which they are exposed from our neighbours over the line, and of other causes, it is insufficient to accomplish the end in view. That very great distress exists is not controverted; it is admitted; the Finance Minister acknowledges it—also that it has been largely aggravated by the system of bringing in American goods, which are sold at reduced slaughter prices. He further admits that there are cases of extreme hardship, but he does not feel

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it to be the duty of the Administration to intermeddle. He lays down the proposition that a Government cannot be free and at the same time paternal—that a Government cannot properly exercise a paternal influence over the industries of a country unless it has the power of limiting production as well. I must dissent from that idea; in the strict sense no Government can be free; the very conception of Government is contrary to the idea of freedom, and in that sense no Government can be free. I believe that it can be free and paternal to a certain extent, having a fair solicitude for our industries, and adapting its policy from time to time to the varying exigencies of the country, it may yield to the stress of the times, and yet be a free Government.

I don't think that a Government, in order to be free, should be rigid and unelastic, and incapable of adapting itself to the exigencies of the country. The Finance Minister seeing, as he freely acknowledges, the distress of the country, might very fairly, without doing violence to his views on that subject, have met this condition of affairs.

There is no doubt, that being a new country and our relations being such with the two great nations with which our business has most to do, our circumstances are somewhat peculiar, and I believe if there ever was a country in which the Government might strain a point in order to encourage industries, that country is Canada. We have valuable resources, and all the elements essential to success in manufacturing enterprise. We have iron, coal, water-power, and as tractable a population as can be found in the factories of any country.

I am not an extreme Protectionist. I would not surround this country with an impassable barrier by way of a tariff, but I am one of those who believe that the circumstances in which we find the manufacturing industries of the country are such that the resolution proposed by the hon. member for Montreal West may fairly be supported by the members of this House.

MR. DOMVILLE—I have listened with great attention to the speeches on this subject, and I must confess I am