

A TARIFF COMMISSION.

Considerable discussion is being carried on relative to the appointment by the new Liberal Government at Ottawa, of a commission of experts, to investigate and report on the effects of the operation of the present tariff upon the general prosperity of the country, and to make such suggestions and recommendations with respect to the revision of the tariff, as in their judgment they may consider advisable.

Much good may result from such an investigation and report, if the duty is entrusted to capable and honorable gentlemen, whose duties and judgment are unfettered by any instructions tending to lead to a decision in favor of any party theory or policy. We believe that from among our leading bankers, merchants and manufacturers a selection could be made of men of large business experience and financial ability, who would cheerfully devote their time to this duty, and would treat the subject on strictly business principles, considering every point in the interest of the country at large. The report of a commission composed of men of strong party prejudices, or holding extreme views with regard to free trade or protection would be of no value whatever. What the country requires is a tariff based on such equitable and generally accepted principles as would convey to capitalists and others some assurance of permanence and stability. The absence of any fixed and well understood principles upon which our former tariffs should have been based has proved a serious impediment or obstacle in the way of all new enterprises. In the United States it has long been recognized that very few of the members either in the House of Representatives or in the Senate are sufficiently conversant with business operations as to be able to form an intelligent or independent judgment on the various items of the tariff, the discussions on which are mainly conducted by professional politicians whose only qualification is that of long speeches. A very general feeling prevails among the leading commercial men and press of that country, that it would be well if a change in the constitution could be effected, under which the regulation of the tariff should be entrusted to a commission of experts, whose decisions should remain in force for ten years, any amendments proposed to require a two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress. A very casual reference to the debates in our own House of Commons shows how very few of its members are qualified for an intelligent discussion of a subject which only practical business experience could enable them to handle.

One of the duties of the proposed Commission would be to hold meetings at which parties proposing to establish new industries or to extend existing ones could submit their propositions for aid or encouragement, and to decide to what extent, if any, these propositions should be entertained.

We can only repeat that we believe that the decision and recommendations of a well selected commission may be productive of much benefit, and would exercise a large influence on the opinions and actions of Parliament, and upon public opinion generally.

DEPRECIATION OF FARM PROPERTY

It is greatly to be regretted that in order to create disaffection towards Government, the politicians of Canada have found it expedient to create among its people a feeling of dissatisfac-

tion with their present condition and of despondency as to the future. A fair and candid comparison of our position with that of other countries including the United States, shows that Canada has suffered less than in any of them from the depreciation of the value of farm products.

According to the returns of the Bureau of Industries for Ontario, the decline in the value of farms and farm buildings in this Province, between the years 1880 and 1890 was 1.83 per cent. According to the census of the United States the decline during these years, was, in Maine, 3.7 per cent.; in New Hampshire, 12.7 per cent.; in Vermont, 26.5 per cent.; in Massachusetts, 12.8 per cent.; in Rhode Island, 15.5 per cent.; in Connecticut, 21.5 per cent.; in New York, 8.3 per cent.; in New Jersey, 16.6 per cent.; Pennsylvania, 5.5 per cent.; in Ohio, 6.8 per cent. In every one of these States the depreciation has been much greater than in Canada.

The United States census for 1895 shows a deplorable falling off in the value of farm products, including live stock. The following is taken from the columns of the New York Journal of Commerce:—"The statistics of farm animals published by the Department of Agriculture tell a melancholy story. The aggregate value of farm animals increased for many years until it reached a climax in 1884, and then declined somewhat, rising again till in 1893 it was a little higher than in 1884. At the present time, the value is \$755,580,597 less than it was in 1893." This is a disastrous decline for three years. All animals except milch cows participated in the decline.

Nor has the decline in values been confined to animals, but has extended to all farm products. The New York Produce Exchange Reporter supplies the following figures:

	1891.	1895.
Wheat, value.....	\$513,472,711	\$237,338,996
Corn ".....	836,439,238	567,509,106
Oats ".....	232,312,267	163,655,068
	1,582,224,206	968,103,172
Decrease		613,121,034
Add decrease in value. Hay, potatoes and buckwheat.....		207,452,282
" " Farm animals.....		755,580,597
		\$1,576,153,913

If Canadian farmers, who feel disheartened over the present position, would carefully consider the above figures, they should feel satisfied that if matters are unsatisfactory here, they have been immensely worse in the United States. If the seventy million people market there has done so little to maintain prices for their own farmers, how is it to be expected that such a market will prove of any value to Canadian farmers?

FREE TRADE PLATITUDES.

It would prove an endless task to quote and refute the many silly platitudes by which the advocates of Free Trade in Canada attempt to establish their pet theory, and dispute the practical advantages resulting from Protection. Three of these may at present be referred to:—(1) That Free Trade promotes, while Protection retards the growth of foreign trade; (2) That Protection imposes on the consumers of a protected country the payment upon home-produced merchandise of an additional price equal to the customs duty levied upon similar articles imported from a competing country; (3) That Canadians, being endowed with brain, brawn and muscle equal to, if not superior to those of any people in the world,