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CHAPTER I.

TARIFF POLICY.

A RECORD OF BROKEN PLEDGES.

It is well-known that for a score of years previous to the change of Government, the question of protection or free trade was the chief issue between the two political parties. The party now led by the Premier of Canada always proclaimed itself to be an anti-protection or free trade party. The leaders gave at different times a different name to their creed. Sometimes it was free trade pure and simple, sometimes it was commercial union, sometimes continental free trade, sometimes a revenue tariff, sometimes free trade as it is in England; but always it was opposed to protection. The leaders of the party have forgotten to keep their pledges and are trying to make the people forget that they made them. For this reason it is necessary to refer to the acknowledged creed of the Liberal party as found in the platform adopted in the Convention of 1893. In these resolutions, which were moved by the present Finance Minister, we find the following declaration:

TARIFF REFORM AS IT WAS PROMISED.

"That the customs tariff of the Dominion should be based, not as it is now, upon the protective principle, but upon the demands of the public service."

Then follows a fearful arraignment of the existing tariff, which is accused of having

"developed monopolies, trusts and combines,"

"decreased the value of farms and other property,"

"oppressed the masses to the enrichment of the few,"

"discriminated against Great Britain,"

"and occasioned great public and private injury."

After this indictment the party pledges itself "to the removal of this obstacle," and declares

"that the tariff should be reduced to the needs of honest, economical and efficient government, that it should be so adjusted as to make free or bear as lightly as possible upon the necessities of life and should be so arranged as to promote freer trade with the whole world."

Proceeding the resolution states that "the issue between the two parties is now clearly defined." It closes with these words:

"We denounce the principle of protection as radically unsound, unjust to the masses of the people, and we declare our conviction that any tariff changes based on that principle must fail to afford any satisfactory relief to the troubles under which the country labours."

Here is the distinct statement that protection will be abolished.