

*The Address—Mr. Brown*

all. As I say, there are many poor farmers in Saskatchewan who would be willing to wear these 10 cent socks. Indeed, I should be glad to get some myself. These socks that, as I say, were selling for 10 cents a pair cannot now be handled by the local merchants because of the increase in price due to the tariff legislation last fall. The onus rests upon hon. gentlemen opposite to show me where to-day I can get socks at a similar price.

We are being advised on the one hand to go into the production of live stock and in the speech from the throne it is said that we must reduce the cost of production. I want to remind the house that just at the time we are being urged to go into the production of live stock and our friends opposite are talking about decreasing the costs of production, the Minister of National Revenue has taken a course that simply amounts to a slap in the face. I refer to barbed wire. Barbed wire has been on the free list since the early days of the first Laurier administration. I remember in 1898 buying barbed wire to fence in a half section and I got the benefit of the wiping out of the tariff duty. Imagine the absurdity of telling us on the one hand to go into the production of live stock, and then on the other hand putting up the price of one of our prime essentials for the caring of live stock! If we could get not only barbed wire but woven wire at half the price we are getting it to-day, there would be no question about farmers going into live stock. The time has come when sheep will be a very valuable asset on the farm. But what is the chief handicap in handling sheep? The cost of fencing. In this connection I am going to read an extract from a despatch by the correspondent of the Manitoba Free Press:

About \$250,000 of barbed wire is imported annually. It comes from several countries, including Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and the United States.

Here is what I want the house to note particularly:

Since last summer, the price of wire has been falling rapidly. Exact prices are not available, but Hardware and Metal, of Toronto, states that recent declines aggregate 25 cents per 80-rod spools. These declines have made it difficult for Canadian wire manufacturers to compete. Hence, the request for dump duties.

The government has fixed an arbitrary value, but has not yet announced what it is. The intention is to place the figure sufficiently high to offset recent reductions in price, and to enable Canadian manufacturers to make a profit. If foreign firms attempt to undersell this fixed price they will encounter dump duties of 50 per cent.

I do not wish, Mr. Speaker, to be forced into the position of having to demand fixed

[Mr. Brown]

prices for our products, for I regard it as not economically sound. But what are we going to do if the Minister of National Revenue insists that every manufacturer in Canada must have a price that shall secure him the home market at a certain profit? I put that question to the house. I should regret to be forced into the position of demanding a fixed price on wheat, but there is a situation that confronts us. This government takes the position that every man engaged in manufacturing must be secured a certain price for his products. What are we going to do?

Now what is necessary in the west? I admit, Mr. Speaker, that any measure that can be proposed at the present time other than direct financial assistance, will not be very effective. It will be difficult to give relief. Nothing but a straight money grant to every individual farmer on the prairies would really give him relief. But we know the difficulty in that regard. The hon. member for Regina (Mr. Turnbull) said that the people are not starving. No; that may be true. But they are simply hanging on and wondering what they are going to do. What is necessary is that means should be taken to restore the confidence and morale of the farmer. If that confidence can be restored then the farmers will go forward with some hope. But if they are going to be met by such impositions as this duty on barbed wire, I do not know what they are going to do. Of course, the price has not been raised, nor is that likely. But the point is, there has not been a reduction; that is what we want to emphasize. And unless steps are taken to restore the confidence of the farmers of the west the situation presents a grave danger to the commercial life of Canada.

**Mr. MORAND:** Would the hon. gentleman be prepared to have a factory closed and many men put out of employment in order to get wire a little cheaper?

**Mr. BROWN:** I do not know that the question requires an answer. Surely we have as much right to be guaranteed a price on our products as have the manufacturers of barbed wire.

**Mr. MULLINS:** Is not barbed wire cheaper on the prairies than it used to be?

**Mr. BROWN:** Of course, but we are not buying it as cheap as I bought it in 1898. It is not a matter of buying barbed wire cheaper than we used to buy it; it is a question of the Minister of National Revenue preventing us from getting the benefit of the reduction to which we are entitled.