

tag. They must go a great deal further and get at the bottom of the whole matter, and see that our manufacturers are protected, and not forced to sell their twine outside of Canada for the reason that they are not permitted to sell it in Canada. I approve of the Bill so far as it goes, protecting the farmer against short lengths and short weight. Any legislation which we can put on the statute-book to protect the farmer it is our duty to pass; but we must protect him not only in regard to the length, but in regard to the price of the twine. There is no doubt that during the years gone by the price to the farmers was increased as much as three cents a pound by short lengths. A farmer paying for what was represented as 600 feet and getting only 480 feet was simply paying three cents a pound more than he ought to have paid. We are trying to remedy that; but we must go further and break up this huge trust that enables the American manufacturer to fix the price of twine in Canada.

Mr. STEPHENS. I am astonished to hear the hon. member for Halton (Mr. Henderson) say that the dealer's price is fixed for him by the manufacturer.

Mr. HENDERSON. I did not say by the manufacturer. I say it is fixed by the American trust.

Mr. STEPHENS. It is not. I have been in the binder twine business since it has been established in Canada, and I have never yet had any dealer or manufacturer say to me at what price I should sell the twine, or even ask at what price I was selling it. I have handled as much as 100 tons in a year. I have never known a year in which I could not buy twine freely except the year 1896, when the government of the day went into a combine with the Canadian Cordage Company of Montreal and tied up all the factories except one or two, and then they would not give you a price on twine but would sell it and put the price on afterwards.

Mr. SPROULE. May I ask what twine sold at that year?

Mr. STEPHENS. It was very low and would have been considerably lower if the government had not tied up all the twine they made and allowed the Consumers' Cordage Company to sell at their own prices. True the twine was cheap, but the reason was the hemp was very cheap. That was before the Cuban war and the hemp was sold in New York for less than four cents a pound. The labour market was also very cheap. That was during the hard time of the national policy, which made labour cheap.

Mr. HEYD. I want to explain this binder twine duty business and put the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Blain) right. That hon.

gentleman evidently did not know what he was talking about. I said that only binder twine containing manilla was subject to a duty. Let me read from the Customs Tariff of the United States:

491. Binding twine: All binding twine manufactured from New Zealand hemp istle or Tampico fiber, sisal grass, or sunn, or a mixture of any two or more of them, of single ply and measuring not exceeding six hundred feet to the pound; provided, that articles mentioned in this paragraph if imported from a country which lays an import duty on like articles imported from the United States, shall be subject to a duty of one-half of one cent per pound.

That shows that there is no duty on binder twine except that which contains manilla.

Mr. HENDERSON. That is the kind we make.

Mr. T. I. THOMSON. I think that the binder twine question presents a much more serious aspect than that shown by the hon. member for Halton. If there is an American combine for the purpose of fixing the price of binder twine in Canada and extorting larger figures from our farmers than are necessary, the government of Canada is not altogether blameless. The Conservatives established a plant at the Kingston penitentiary some years ago, so that we might make a certain quantity of twine and put it on the market to regulate the price. And it was put on the market at a reasonable advance on cost to prevent combinations from charging the farmers extortionate prices. The Ontario government did likewise. They put a plant at the Central prison for that purpose. But during all the years the present administration has been in office, the manufacturers have been extorting exaggerated prices from the farmers, and the twine manufactured in the Kingston penitentiary and the Central prison at Toronto cannot be bought a cent cheaper than the American trust charge for twine; yet these gentlemen, while they charge the farmers just as much as the American combine charges him, will sell to their friends, the jobbers, for one-half what they charge the farmers. They sell to the farmers mixed manilla twine at nine and a half to ten cents a pound, while they sell to their friends hundreds of tons at four and five cents a pound. The government have the key of the position. Had they placed their twine on the market at reasonable prices, no combine could charge more. There must be some self-interest, some conspiracy in order that the farmers may be charged more than reasonable profit on the twine manufactured by the government.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Really I cannot allow such ridiculous statements to go unchallenged. I cannot understand how any sane man can seriously get up and make such a statement as the hon. gentleman has