

made by the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Tarte) at a banquet in Valleyfield, where he assured the cotton kings that the tariff would not be interfered with. Therefore we may reasonably conclude that the settled policy of this government seems to be stability of tariff.

This session we hoped to have the duty on coal oil wiped out. That was one of the great issues during the last four or five years when the Liberal party was in opposition. That duty was made to do service on every Liberal platform from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and the people of the North-west had reason to expect that this very high duty would be removed.

From what I could learn, I feared that this session the former duty on lumber would have been reimposed, and I listened with great regret to the remarks of the hon. member for North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) on that point. If there is one thing in the North-west which we need it is lumber. There are no pine forests in that country, and we have to get our lumber from Ontario or Minnesota, and if the duty were reimposed it would inflict great hardship on our people, who require a great deal of lumber in building granaries and stables and sheds to protect their cattle and horses in the very severe weather.

As far as I can judge, we are more likely to have the tariff raised than lowered, and if such be the case, I would like to sound a warning note to the Liberals of this country. I think it is fair to assume that, owing to the educative campaign which was conducted for twenty years prior to 1896, at least one-half of our people have been converted to the idea of free trade or at least a tariff for revenue only. But, we have to-day the spectacle of the Liberal party being gradually led along the path of high duties with a prospect of being ultimately delivered right into the fold of protection, body and boots. If that be the case, a warning note ought to be sounded. I believe that the great mass of the Liberal party in this country is sound on this tariff question. I do not believe that the people want protection, and it seems to me that official Liberalism stands in this position: The voice is the voice of free trade Jacob, but the hands are the hands of protective Esau.

I like to be perfectly frank. I think it is desirable that we should call a spade a spade, and if our present policy tariff be a protective tariff—and I believe it is—and if a protective tariff was bad for twenty years before 1896, it is equally bad at present. So far as I am concerned, representing a large constituency in the west, I hope that I will be given grace to raise my voice from time to time against the protective tariff. Exotic industries not indigenous to the country at all are protected by huge bounties. But the farmer is protected in no way whatever. The question of the duty on wheat

was brought up to-night. One hon. member wanted to know if the hon. member for West Assiniboia (Mr. Scott) was willing to agree to the abrogation of the duty on wheat. Well, as far as I am concerned, I would be perfectly satisfied to have the duty taken off wheat altogether, and I believe so would the farmers of the west. The Ministers of Finance (Mr. Fielding) and Customs (Mr. Paterson) will recall that when they conducted an inquiry with regard to the operation of the tariff, in the council chamber at Winnipeg, a large deputation of farmers from all over the province appeared before them and declared in favour of taking off the duty on wheat. The people of the west do not desire protection, but if you are going to protect these industries in the east—the iron and coal industries—by giving them bounties, I would like to put in a plea for a bounty to the farmers of the North-west on growing their wheat.

The future of Canada lies in its vast plains to the west, and unless you make the conditions of that country such that the settlers will be able to procure their necessities cheaply, you are not going to promote the success of that country as you should. I am no prophet, but I think those hon. gentlemen who have traversed our western plains, will agree with me that in probably a decade, the balance of power in Canada will be vested in that country. I remember well when the right hon. leader of the government was wont to make strong pleas in behalf of that country. I am disposed to believe that his heart still beats in sympathy with the people of the North-west, and I would appeal to him to-night not to allow the protective idea to prevail in our tariff.

Something is due to the North-west, if we desire that country to succeed as it should. And in that connection I would urge a plea against the introduction of too many European immigrants into that country. We have on the plains sufficient now of these foreign immigrants. Land is becoming scarce, such as we have in Manitoba, and we can well afford to hold these fertile plains for our own sons. Let us put there the best classes of people we can procure, people with broad ideas, people with good blood, people in whom we have confidence. Let us settle these people on the plains, and then we will have a population that will assist instead of retard us in our progress, a population which will be able to exercise intelligence in the politics of this country and work along the right lines when the time comes for them to receive the franchise.

Now, although not strictly germane to this question in view of the great latitude that has been allowed in this debate, I would like to say this—that I think it would be desirable to have the government enunciate a clear policy with regard to railway bonus-ing, the construction of railways and the ex-

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