

Western Farmers on Protection

Extracts from letters received in answer to Walter Carter's Defence of Protection

PROTECTION BETWEEN PROVINCES

If we had had free trade on agricultural implements, would not there have been a greater inducement for American farmers to come into the west, and for people generally to have invested more freely in agriculture and stayed with it, whereby the gain to the total wealth of the country through the introduction of fresh capital and the increase in agricultural production would have been much greater than it has been, owing to the more limited introduction of capital by the farm implement manufacturers.

Why not advocate a customs barrier between Manitoba and Ontario, in order to compel the eastern manufacturers to come west and make use of the undeveloped minerals and coal of Alberta and British Columbia.

Why refund the duty on raw material, such as iron imports for the purpose of making up articles for re-exportation if the development of mines is such an important question?—Stanley Rackham, Lloydminster, Sask.

PROTECTION AND ONTARIO

Mr. Carter stated that "If Calgary was only big enough we would be getting 40 cents for oats when we only get 30 cents now." Calgary now has probably three times the population it had ten years ago. Is the prairie farmer's home market any better in consequence? Not one whit. It is the price we can get for our exportable surplus which sets the price for the rest. He asks of us that we keep on paying an enormously high tariff, 80 per cent. of which goes into the pockets of the manufacturer, in the hope that some day we will get 10 cents more for our oats. Ridiculous! If we want to buy back our oats after they are ground in Calgary we have to pay Fort William price plus freight Fort William to Calgary.

Under protection during the last 40 years, Ontario alone lost 110,000 of her rural population. Not only that, the two decades 1862 to 1871, and 1882 to 1891, in which higher protection prevailed, show a less relative increase of population than the lower tariff period of the seventies, and the Preference Tariff of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The absolute increase in twenty years of protection was greater than any subsequent twenty years of Canadian history.

I was in Quebec 17 and 25 years ago and venture the assertion that neither the closing down of the small Lachine wire factories, nor the howlings of the opposition had any appreciable effect on the ebb and flow of French Canadian youths to the manufacturing towns of New England. The high tariff in force at that time had much more to do with it.—S. Stevenson, Craigmyle, Alta.

TWINE AND WIRE PRICES

I could show Mr. Carter some barbed wire that cost 9 cents per pound and some even 15 cents that was bought before it was put on the free list. Luckily I did not have to fence before barbed wire was put on the free list, so I got mine in 1897 for 3 cents, 1899 for 4 cents, 1902 for 3 cents, 1904 for 4 cents, 1905 for 3 cents, since when I have used woven wire, but I never heard that barbed wire had got so high again as it was before being put on the free list.

Take binding twine. In 1891 I paid 17 cents per pound, in 1893 I bought it for 11 cents, in 1898 for 9 cents, 1899 for 12 cents, 1901 for 10 cents, 1904 for 10 cents, 1906 for 12 cents, 1907 for 11 cents, 1908 for 11 cents, 1909 for 9 cents, 1910 for 9 cents, 1911 for 9 cents, 1912 for 8 cents, 1913 for 10 cents, 1914 for 9 cents. Since then the war has had a lot to do with prices but I got mine in 1916 at \$10.85 per 100 pounds. I always heard twine was far higher before 1891, even as high as 20 cents in 1887. This disposes of the contention that the farmers of the prairie provinces, paid the same old price after the duty on twine was taken off.

Protection leads to wars between nations as it is that idea of Mr. Carter's that a country must "maintain

supremacy" which is at the foot of most, if not all, wars.—C. S. Watkins, Langvale, Man.

HAVE CARS RETURN EMPTY

Mr. Carter would have us believe that but for the tariff our manufactures would be controlled by the American trusts, factories closed, and prices raised skyward. He forgets that in an open market the trusts would have to compete with the whole world, and to gain our markets undersell the whole world and hence forsooth, how could they boost prices? Abolish the tariff and Canadians would supply their American trade from the home factory, and the Americans would supply their Canadian trade from the home factory, and there would be no duplicating of factories. No more need for it than to parallel the railways, but the object in locating these factories is to pocket the duties. The treasury loses by the deal and the country gains nothing.

Mr. Carter is much perturbed over the long haul to the West. The only use he would have for railways would be to carry our surplus products to the seaboard. Since he would not import, the cars would return empty. So with the great ocean freighters. Our grain would be charged with passage both ways.—George Price, Lelia, Alta.

WHAT THE GERMANS WOULD SAY

Any attempt to foster industries against nature is economically wrong and only results in injustice to the consumer.

How many employees of the Massey-Harris Company went to seek employment in the fall of 1914 when the company closed down its plant rather than operate at a reduced profit?

I can imagine the Kaiser and Bethmann-Hollweg saying: "There are thousands of German lives being laid down today because Germany and other countries failed to put a prohibitive tariff on the goods which Europe manufactured and exported to Germany and other countries, and enabled her to become rich and wage this war which is devastating Europe." The folly of this argument is apparent on the face of it. Why should we not have accepted the goods of all countries and so prevented all from becoming rich.—"Hatch," Speddington, Sask.

HIRELING PRESS—DOPED PUBLIC

If some system could be devised whereby the purchaser in a general store had to pay the bona fide value of an article at one counter, and the amount of tariff with added profit at another, it would be a great eye-opener to the people.

A hireling press is much to blame for this condition of affairs. The manufacturer robs the people, and with part of his ill gotten gains proceeds to dope his victims so that he may perpetrate his robbery still further.—D. Blaine, Landis, Sask.

\$1,500 TARIFF IN THREE YEARS

In the fifteen years I have been here I have paid \$1,500 in tariff on machinery alone, besides much on other goods. We were promised free trade on machinery when I came here, by the Laurier government. I believe Laurier intended to give us free trade, but he got tied down with the machine men. The money that we should have saved by free trade was given to the newspaper men to shout loyalty which defeated reciprocity of 1911.—W. H. Johnson, Saskatoon, Sask.

As long as the manufacturer can make profits under the tariff by investing his money in the east, and the tariff and freight are paid by the consumer, i.e., the western farmer, so long will that manufacturer rest content in his easy chair, but under free trade he would have to leave his easy chair and set to work to meet real competition.—W. H. Newton, Aberdeen, Sask.

Protection robs me every day. If it robs me personally, it robs the nation for I am part of it. Oh for Free Trade as they have it in England!—Alex. Findleton, Tugayke, Sask.




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