

Mr. O'BRIEN. I do not propose, upon this question of binding twine, to go into the whole argument between protection and free trade, but I would point out that there is a great difference between the duties upon sugar and the duties upon binding twine. The duty that has been taken off sugar has been taken off the raw material, and as I understand it, the raw material of binding twine is admitted free, so that there is all the difference in the world. Therein lies the whole principle of the National Policy—that the raw material is admitted free while duty is placed upon the manufactured article. Now, something was said about the price of binders. The hon. gentleman has given up the whole case with regard to binders, because he has admitted that the price of binders was brought down \$65 on each article. Well, Sir, under the National Policy I say, and there can be no contradiction to it, that the price of agricultural implements has gone down very nearly, on the whole, 50 per cent. since that policy came into operation. What absurdity it is to say that the National Policy, as regards these articles, has imposed a tax upon the farmers. We know there is no foundation for it. Now, with regard to binding twine, having pointed out the distinction that must be made between the duty upon the raw material and the duty upon the manufactured article, I beg to tell the hon. gentleman, and those who have spoken on this question, that I have got that same mixed binding twine that he speaks of as worth 12 to 13 cents—I have bought it in quantity of 100 pounds at 10 cents. I bought it myself the other day, and that is the regular price in the town of Barrie, where I get my supply. It can be bought at retail by the 100 pounds at that price, and I was assured that the article was sufficiently good for all practical purposes. I could have got a cheaper article—I am speaking from memory now, because I am not positive about the other articles—I believe I could have got an inferior article at 8 cents, and I could have got a better article at 13 cents and 14 cents. The very highest price quoted to me for the best twine was 14 cents; for the medium quality, which I purchased, and which seemed to be sufficiently good for the purpose, 10 cents, and, if I had desired, I could have obtained an inferior article for 8 cents. Those prices were at retail for 100 pounds, and there are very few farmers who would want less than that quantity. If that is the case, it does not matter whether the duty is 25, 50 or 100 per cent. If we get the articles as cheap as we would do otherwise we have nothing of which to complain. The assumption is made in all these cases that the consumer pays, in addition to the cost of the article or what the cost of the article ought to be, the duty. That is to say, if a man ought to be able to buy binding twine at 10 cents, with a duty of 25 per cent., he really is called upon to pay the difference between the true cost and 25 per cent. If that were so, it would be very good ground for an attack on the National Policy. But hon. gentlemen must establish that as a matter of fact, otherwise there is no foundation for their argument. What is the case? I, for one, would never stand in this House or elsewhere to defend a policy which would place anything like an unfair advantage in the hands of the manufacturers. I do not think the consumers should pay

an additional price in order that any man or any body of men should make fortunes. It is our duty as regards the consumers to watch the operations of the National Policy, and if we find any articles on which any manufacturers or combination of manufacturers enforces a higher price in consequence of the duty, it is our duty to interfere, to step in and tell the Government that as regards that article or any article of the same class the duty should be reduced and the protection, of which the manufacturers are taking an unfair advantage, should not any longer be continued. But so long as the duty operates simply to prevent the introduction of foreign-made articles and does not increase their price to the consumer, the National Policy is answering its legitimate purpose and the purpose for which it was proposed in 1878 when it was adopted. If my figures are correct, my case is proved, and the hon. gentleman has nothing further to say. He may argue from now to doomsday the theoretical advantage of free trade as against protection, so long as we are satisfied that the prices of the articles entering into general consumption are not enhanced to the consumer by the consumer paying the duty on the manufactured article. That seems to me to be the whole case. The hon. gentleman endeavoured to make out his case, and the figures he gave were, no doubt, quoted fairly and honestly; but the whole question depends on whether his figures are correct or not. My case also depends on the accuracy of my figures. The hon. gentleman says he paid 12 cents; I paid 10 cents, and I say I paid no more than I should have done. The Government in the matter of sugar simply did what they ought to have done in accordance with the principles of the National Policy, and that was to admit raw sugar free of duty.

Mr. MULOCK. It took them a long time to do it.

Mr. O'BRIEN. It may be a fair ground of attack to say that they should have taken this action long ago. The answer to that would be that the duty on sugar provided a certain revenue, and until the Government saw their way to replace it they could not remove the duty. It is evident that this was the case, for we are obliged to make up a portion of the deficiency by increasing the tariff on other articles of a similar nature. One of the articles of a similar kind in which the farmers are personally interested is that of salt; and so soon as the Government found the operation of the National Policy was doing a great injustice to the general consumer they stepped in, as they ought to have done, and as they ought to do in all such cases, and reduced the duty, so as to prevent combinations taking advantage of the circumstances and placing an undue tax on the consumer. I say the whole question rests on this: whether, as a matter of fact, the consumer is made to pay the duty upon the manufactured article. Of course, if there was a duty on the raw material, necessarily the consumer would have to pay the duty; but if our manufacturers, having the raw material free, can produce the manufactured article and sell it to the consumer at as low a rate as it can be bought outside, then the consumer pays nothing. This duty might as well be 50 per cent. or not enforced. It is a mere matter of form as to what the duty is, so long as the consumer does not pay it. The whole article comes down to a question of figures and the