

(February 26, 1906.)

"A Canadian Farmer on the Tariff."

BY MR. E. C. DRURY, OF CROWN HILL.

In an address to the Canadian Club Mr. E. C. Drury, of Crown Hill, speaking on the subject, "A Canadian Farmer on the Tariff," said:—

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Canadian Club,—I may as well confess at the outset that I came here to-day with a good deal of fear. I was not afraid of the character of your club, I knew it was made up of a membership broad-minded enough to listen to all. But from the somewhat formidable list of names your President sent me I expected to come right into the enemy's camp. Instead I see around me many familiar faces. I see Professor James and Mr. Putman, old associates, and several of your members whom I know. In fact I feel as if I were more or less in a circle of friends.

I don't suppose, however, that there is anyone here except myself who is actively engaged in farming. If there are I am glad of it and feel even more at home. And I hope our discussion will not lead you to regret your kind invitation to me.

I am going to speak on a much discussed question—the tariff. You know farmers are not very often heard from. They are generally a silent lot. Our occupation in a sense makes us so. We carry it on by ourselves. We are in a sense isolated. We are not used to running before the country to express our views. I think we are a little too silent. The agricultural interests are not as often heard from as they are entitled to be.

Do you know that we represent three-fifths of the Canadian population according to the last census. Of course, I include with the farmer the corner blacksmith and the corner wheelwright, who are so closely associated and identified with him. The rural population then is three-fifths of the whole, so that I think from the standpoint of numbers we are entitled to be heard from.

Then again we have three times as much capital invested as all other enterprises of the country combined. I will quote you the official figures. The farmer has capital invested to the amount of over \$1,700,000,000, while all other industries combined only total \$552,000,000 of capital invested. The farmers then have three times as much capital invested as all others combined. Our invested capital is so great that it entitles us to be heard from.

And ours is productive capital. The farmers add to the wealth of the country \$443,000,000 per year, while all other producers combined add only \$307,575,000.

You tell me that I am incorrect, that the census returns show that total manufacturers' productions amounts to \$481,000,000. I reply that it is incorrect to figure that way. That the manufacturer can only be credited with the additional value which he puts upon the raw material with which he started. In finding the true amount of his contribution to the total wealth of the country you must deduct the cost of the raw material with which he started. According to the census figures of 1891, which are the last yet to hand on this subject, the cost of the raw material equals approximately half of the total production and my figures are thus computed upon that basis. So that on the ground of population, capital invested and production we are entitled to be heard from.

In the social and political life of the country the farm home is the backbone of stability. We have many faults—I know that well, but we are the one class that is less swayed by the excitement of the moment. We contribute the ballast.

But we have been heard and heard perhaps to some effect before the Tariff Commission. It was presented almost unanimously by the various deputations of farmers. The few that were divergent from the general consensus of opinion did not represent the farmers' interests. The great agricultural interests are practically unanimous in their views. Several strong pleas were submitted, some from Ontario, some from Québec, and even from the North West Territories. The unanimity of opinion is remarkable because there was no general farmers' organization; it was not the result of agitation; it was not the result of putting our heads together. It was the spontaneous expression of a united public opinion. The farmers all said that protection did not help them.

There are three points which I want to develop briefly, for I know my time is nearly up and you want to hasten away to your work; three facts or reasons that I want to lay before you. First, a protective tariff does not and can not benefit the farmer. Now some of the members of the Manufacturers' Association may dispute that statement. It amuses farmers to see the parental way in which these gentlemen profess to guard their rights. Every year they go to Ottawa—in fact they make several annual pilgrimages—and every time they talk about the poor farmer. If he had sufficient protection, they said, he would get wealthy, so they tried it, and instead he got poorer. Not one farmer in a dozen believes their talk and that one is the dunderhead.

Protection doesn't help the farmer. What does he produce? Mainly pork, beef, cheese, butter and grain, with eggs and poultry. The Manufacturers' Association has pieces in the Toronto papers that

nine-tenths of this production is home consumed, but the farmer knows that it is the market report of the old country that fixes the price.

The farmers are not theorists. They are practical men and they know that their price is gauged by the price in the old country market. I took ten pigs to the market and nine out of ten were sold on the way to the old country, but I got the price for them all that the one would bring in the old country.

It is the law of practical economics that the exportable surplus regulates the price of the whole, barring combinations. At the same time the farmers don't want combinations; they are law-abiding citizens. We couldn't combine if we tried, so perhaps there isn't so much credit due to us.

The farmer knows these things. He has the best kind of teacher in practical experience. Before the combine of oatmeal makers the price of oats was lower in the United States than here. So the duty is removed from oats. And there should be less drastic duty on everything, the view of the Hon. Richard Patterson. The price can't be raised by any trick of the tariff. We are told that we can build up a common centre and consume our own products. The absurdity of it! We are not like England, France and Germany, where the agricultural resources have been exploited to the last degree. Millions of acres still wait in Canada for the pioneer farmer. Canada need not fear the importation of agricultural products. If Canada imports agricultural products we will have to open up communication with Mars or some other planet and import them for the whole world. The farmer knows that no twisting and turning of the tariff can add to the price of what he has to sell, but he knows the tariff enhances the price of what he has to buy. When we see that we can buy an American reaper shipped in here for the same price as a Canadian reaper we know something is raising the price of the Canadian reaper—and we blame the tariff. When we can buy a suit of clothes of English cloth as cheaply as a Canadian make we think something is raising the price of the Canadian cloth and blame the tariff. When I had to sell the fleeces of twenty-five sheep to buy a suit of ordinary tweed clothes, I knew something was doing some shrinking—and I blamed the tariff. The farmer finds the tariff enhances the price of what he has to buy and he needs relief.

The farmer has to direct his own business. He works harder with his hands than any other man. He has more manual labor and he has to manage his business, too. He gets little profit and he stands in need of relief. The statements I gave before the Tariff Commission on behalf of the farmer are to be reproduced in the Canadian Magazine. Study the situation from his standpoint. Take into consideration his own wages; his son's and the interest on his accumulated investment and he lands a little behind. His accumulated capital you say is there, but

that was gotten from the back woods by his grandfather. The farmers that come out better than even only does so by frugality and very good management.

The farmer has the worst of the labor problem. When his hired man strikes he has to do double labor himself. The hired man has the city factory idea now-a-days. He works only from seven till six and the farmer is left to do all the inevitable chores after that time. It isn't that he's a stingy grub that he works that long. Its because the hired man quit at six to play football. And when a wet day comes along he lies in the haymow and the farmer pays his wages just the same.

If the farmer were unreasonable he would demand that abominable thing called free trade. If we were a set of cranks we would do that and be looked on as what the union men call scabs. But we have made only moderate and modest requests. We ask that in the revision of the tariff all changes shall have a downward tendency and we would like to see British preference carried as far as it will go. You see we are loyal and patriotic. We would like to see it extended till we had free trade throughout the Empire. We are ready to give a helping hand to the mother country, knowing her ships will want return cargoes and freight rates will become a great deal lower.

I have nothing but goodwill to the Manufacturers' Association, but when I think of the unfair things they urge I think their position strange. They urge greater protection from cheap foreign labor. But the farmer pays the bill. The Canadian farmer competes with cheaper labor than the manufacturer. He pays from \$225 to \$285 a year with board and washing and it is usually labor that doesn't care from its employer's interests.

In the cattle business the farmer competes with the ranches of Texas and the ranges of Argentina—and even the North West—but against them he makes no complaint as they are brother Canadians. Under the circumstances the manufacturers in making complaint are surely a little Pecksniffian—and that's a mild word to apply.

There is another reason why the change in tariff should be made. We have looked at class reasons so far, now let us look at the census. Canada is opening up a great agricultural country and the agricultural population should be going ahead. What facts does the census show? In the last ten years the agricultural population has increased only 1.62 per cent. while the urban population has increased 31.46 per cent. In British Columbia the agricultural population has increased 45 per cent. and the urban 142 per cent. In Manitoba the agricultural population has increased 65 per cent. and the urban 71 per cent.

Now look at the older provinces. In New Brunswick the agricultural population has decreased by 6 per cent. and the urban increased by 58 per cent. In Nova Scotia the agricultural population has decreased by 12½ per cent. and the urban increased by 68 per cent. In

Ontario the agricultural population has decreased by 3.73 per cent. and the urban increased by 14.28 per cent. In Prince Edward the agricultural population has decreased by 6 per cent. and the urban increased by 4 per cent. In Quebec, even in Quebec, where the farmers and their wives have families of 28 and 30, the agricultural population has only increased by .39 per cent., while the urban has increased by 31.32 per cent.

I have had my dream of greatness for Canada, with its agricultural development of the great national resources going ahead of every other; a dream of agricultural lands opened up to provide trade for the cities and manufactories that would follow, when the agricultural population shall increase and open up the lands for the cities and towns that follow in its wake. Gentlemen, the figures don't look like a fulfilment of my dream.

We are taking the stones from the foundation to put them on top. The farm is the bulwark of the land—the ideal social conditions exist there. It is the simplest, truest and sweetest social life of the nation and the mainstay of its political upbuilding. Ill fares the land where wealth accumulates and men decay. As patriotic Canadians let us all beware of tolerating any system which is undermining the destiny of the great farming community. I thank you all for the sympathetic and appreciative hearing you have given me.
