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A COMMON SENSE TALK ON THE TRADE AGREEMENT

Reciprocity From the Farmer's and Manufacturer's Point of View as Debated on a Railway Train—The Home and the Foreign Markets.

By William Henry in Canadian Farm, Toronto

We were in the smoking compartment of a train between Montreal and Toronto. The day was particularly hot and the trip so far had been uninteresting. After lunch two well-groomed men strolled back to the compartment and, lighting their cigars and comfortably seating themselves, continued a conversation which had evidently occupied their time during the meal.

"It's a bad business, John," said the older of the two, "no matter how you look at it."

"Yes, Mr. Brown," dolefully responded the man addressed as John. "It is striking a deathblow at the industries of this country."

"The worst feature," responded the other, "is the attitude of the farmers. They are all prosperous, never more so, and that prosperity is due to the markets we manufacturers have made. Why the farmers of this country are simply rolling in money at the present prices of farm products, Wallace Nesbitt the other day coined a good phrase when in an interview abroad he said that the 'country is drunk with prosperity.' I think in this movement for lower duties the farmers have been supremely selfish. I suppose it is a dangerous thing to talk politics in public places, but I see that none of you are farmers."

"I don't know about that," laughingly answered a well-dressed, clean-cut young man sitting at the end of the long seat by the window. "For one, I must answer to the soft impeachment, but pray don't mind me; I am interested in your point of view."

"I did not mean to give offence. I assure you," politely replied Mr. Brown, "when I referred to the farmers as selfish."

"Oh, that's all right. I guess we are selfish enough, but don't you think that self-preservation has a lot to do with nature in the factory as well as on the farm?"

"Perhaps it has," answered Mr. Brown, good-naturedly, "but you must realize that we manufacturers have so much at stake in this question of reciprocity that we are naturally alarmed. You see, we not only devote our time to the industries in which we are interested, but our capital is also at stake."

"Well, I guess we are in the same boat again," responded the other, slowly. "I am not farming in a big way, but my hundred and fifty acres in South Ontario, with buildings and improvements are easily worth \$12,000 and you couldn't have my stock for another \$8,000, so that you see I have quite a bit of capital invested in the farm and I am by no means a prominent farmer or breeder in my county."

"I suppose you can look at it that way, but you are apparently prosperous with so much capital, and, if you will excuse me for saying so, a few years ago it would be a rare thing to see a farmer looking as prosperous as you."

"I am doing all right," replied the other, "I am not complaining a bit, but, when the capitalists of Toronto recently signed a manifesto as to their unexampled prosperity it was looked upon by us as rather unnecessary. We knew that they were prosperous before. They didn't need to put it in writing. You say we are selfish. If I desire to share in the prosperity so evident in our towns is selfishness, then we farmers must own up."

"But you do share in the prosperity," insisted the younger of the two manufacturers. "Look at the prices you get now as compared with a few years ago. Take your own statement of your capital; it shows your prosperity."

"But I have only made a small part of it," replied the farmer modestly. "The rest of it was left to me by my father and it took him a lifetime to acquire it. I defy any man in the province to make more money than I do from mixed farming out of 120 acres, and at that my average is scarcely more than a thousand dollars to \$1,200 a year net, and what is that? About five per cent. on my investment. You must understand that in this calculation I make no charge for my own services, nor do I allow wages for my family. I and my family live well, that is true, but we ought to. It is all right for you gentlemen to talk of the prosperity of the farmer, but come out with us and see how we earn our money. Up at five in the morning, sometimes at three or four, when we have to drive into town, and with chores and field work hard at it until sundown, and shortly afterwards to bed to rise and repeat the performance day after day. Would you be content to run your factory on these hours and still that profit?"

"My work is never finished," said the other. "You have little idea of the worry of a manufacturing enterprise."

"Maybe that's true," answered the farmer, "but if you were as dependent upon weather conditions, the effects of drought, rain and frost on crops as we are, you would say that our lives are not without worry. But that has little to do with reciprocity. I am really very sorry that it injures you gentlemen. May I ask what business you are engaged in?"

"I am a shoe manufacturer," replied Mr. Brown, "and my friend is in the woolen goods business."

"Is your protection much reduced," sympathetically enquired the farmer?

"No," answered the other.

"How much?" persisted the farmer.

"Well," said Mr. Brown, hesitatingly, "you see we are not hit at all as yet, but it is the thin edge of the wedge we are afraid of. You must realize that the country cannot stop at reciprocity in farm products. The reciprocity must inevitably lead to a general lowering of the duties."

"And you mean to tell me," questioned the other, sharply, "that having accused the farmer of selfishness, although injured as a manufacturer, you are opposed to reciprocity because maybe, perhaps, possibly, something may happen in the distant future to lower your own protection as a result of this pact going into force?" The young man turned to both the manufacturers, speaking quickly and showing by his voice for the first time some of the ardor of his debate. "There was a silence for a short time and then the older of the two men spoke.

"A controversy about reciprocity involves top many details of a train discussion, but as we have started I will try to briefly state our position. The national policy of protection is the basis of the prosperity of our country both industrial and agricultural. You on the farm and we in the city are dependent upon one another. Protection has built up our towns, and our towns have made your markets profitable. It is much better for you to sell to us than in the far-away market; or, in other words, in the home market the farmer gets the price of his products without having to add the cost of a long haul abroad. If we kill protection the whole industrial machine tumbles down, involving both farmer and manufacturer alike in the ruin; and believe me, free trade for the farmer and protection for the manufacturer cannot live side by side in the same country. Do I make myself plain?"

"To a certain extent, yes," replied the other, "but I cannot agree with either your premises or your conclusions. In the first place we will admit readily the value of the near market and acknowledge that a large part of the cost of a long haul comes out of the farmer; but you must not forget, and as a manufacturer I am sure you will readily acknowledge, that in many cases the home market is not the near market. In the province of Alberta the soil is well suited to the growing of oats and 100 to 130 bushels per acre are even more common. Peterboro may be called the home market and Helena, the centre of the mining industries of Montana, a foreign market. But you would hardly argue that with equal demand in both places the home market in this case is the best market. Strange as it may seem, Quebec has been shipped as far west as Alberta and, according to your own statement, a farmer must pay at least a portion of the cost of the long haul. You would hardly argue that in this case the home market of Alberta is better than the foreign market of the Maine lumber woods across the border line. You would—"

"But," interrupted the younger manufacturer, "I am afraid you are taking extreme cases. Be fair. Confine yourself to typical examples."

"It may seem that the two examples I have given are extreme cases, but you must remember that Canada is a country of extreme distances. It lies for several thousands of miles beside the United States, and I can readily give you, from the maritime provinces with water access to the great coast cities of the United States, along Quebec and Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, out to the Pacific coast, many instances in which the natural course of trade lies from north to south, and where the profitable and home market can be reached by the Canadian producer only at great sacrifice. Can you blame us for preferring the near market to the home market? Now as to our being dependent upon each other—you have stated that the manufacturer has made the farmer's market, but you have neglected to point out that the farmer has made the best market for the Canadian manufacturer. It seems to me that, inasmuch as your prosperity depends upon ours, you would favor rather than oppose anything for the benefit of your good customers—the farmers of this country."

"I am afraid you are talking more fairly by the manufacturers than usual," said the younger manufacturer. "From what I know of the farmers the majority of them are out and out free traders. Take for instance Drury, who opposed Tommy Russell in debate at Beaverton. Don't his free trade views more nearly represent the farmers than the moderate protection views you have expressed? Take Rod Mackenzie, Secretary of the Grain Growers' Association, and Dr. Clark, the Member for Red Deer. How do you reconcile their position with your own? Surely you are champions of the farmers' cause and we are entitled to take their statements as representing the views of their constituents."

"There are a number of free trade farmers just as there are free trade lawyers, doctors, university professors and even manufacturers. I for one am not a free trader. I believe in a tariff for revenue and a tariff for some protection of those industries which need domestic production. I will admit that there are industries which, having resorted to combinations in restraint of trade for the purpose of artificially raising, have benefited in my opinion all rights to any benefit from the tariff. But in the main we farmers are proud of our manufacturing home."

"Except the implement manufacturer," (Continued on Page 4.)

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