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Hon. Mr. Baxter's Scathing Criticism of the Government

(Continued From Page 3)

our people, not even for the sake of some paltry commercial advantage. If there were a famine in Germany tonight, I would say, let her suffer as a just punishment for the deeds of the past. I would not vote a dollar of Canadian money to send a single bushel of wheat even though her population disappeared from the earth.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh Mr. Baxter: That may be too bitter for you, but it is my feeling, and a feeling to which I will give just as much expression as others will give of their sympathy with and slobbering over those who tried to destroy them. There is such a thing as mercy, such a thing as reconciliation, but there is also a thing as justice; and sometimes the only thing that is wise in the interests of the world is to let the axe fall.

Mr. William Elliott (South Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I wish to express to this House my appreciation of the great task which the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) has undertaken. I do not believe there is a man in Canada in whom the people have greater faith than they have in the present Minister of Finance. In 1896 he gave to this Dominion a budget that brought a period of prosperity that has never been equalled in our history. While the budget perhaps does not go as far as we looked for in the past, tariff reductions, I am satisfied it is a step in the right direction, and could possibly have introduced a redistribution bill and got it through before he had those figures or before the census was even taken. When I hear criticism of that kind I am reminded of the character of men I have canvassed from time to time in the past when I used to go about soliciting a personal vote. I used to encounter a type of man, who, when I asked him for his vote, would hit off on something else. There was always something that did not quite suit him. He was dodging the question, and I knew from the start that he did not intend to vote for me anyhow. The hon. member for Springfield will not mind if I class him mentally with those men whom I used to size up as natural born opponents whom I could not win over anyhow. No matter what excuses they made they were bound to vote for the other side. That is the way of a great many members of this group regard the hon. member and other vociferous exponents of the Progressive party. After all, they are good Liberals, because they did not run under the banner of their party; but they thought they had a better chance of getting into the House under the cloak of another party, and another platform a little more deceptive than the Liberal party's. If it is possible to make one so. And now today the clock begins to fall off and we see them in the colors naturally theirs.

I shall not attempt to discuss the budget at any great length. However, there are a few observations that I think it well I should make. Must it not be noticeable to hon. members that right through these budget proposals there is a significant absence of taxation upon luxuries? It strikes at the essentials of fundamentals. Now, let the farmer of this country, to whom the automobile in many cases is simply a replacement of the horse; let such a farmer—I do not mean one of the capouffage brand who is in politics a Liberal first and a farmer only for principle's sake; I mean the real farmer—let him look at the automobile question. My own view of it is that it would have been wiser in the tariff proposals to treat in a different manner the automobile, say, of the style of the Ford. I am not going to advocate the use of brother Henry's products in opposition to any other, but I refer to the cheap form of automobile which gives very good service and which today has become almost essential to rural life. Why not have helped the man on the farm by refusing to impose excise taxes upon such cars? Why not have taken the broadside that Mr. Attorney General Raney delivered in the last election against undue profits of the Ford Motor Company as at least an excuse for giving to those who need the convenience of an automobile in their business a substantial reduction in the cost of that article? Let

the rest of us, those who ride in cars for pleasure, pay the 10 per cent. or 5 per cent. or whatever it may be, and give to those who really need the automobile some real relief. That is what my friends should have done. I have not heard any of the hon. gentlemen to my left demand that. It is very evident that they are not bothered at all about the farmer; the matter of an automobile to the farmer does not matter.

Mr. Ryckman: They like the tax. Mr. Baxter: Oh, charmed with it; they must be very fond of it. A reduction has been made of a few paltry cents upon ploughs and upon a great many other articles that apparently we obtain only from Great Britain. Just imagine bringing a farm cart from Great Britain—and you get a reduction of 2-1/2 per cent on that article; but you cannot get any reduction if you bring it from across the water. I believe that in the course of time we will eventually get where we want to be. I take this stand: We are in a period of great stress and the financial condition of this country is such that we cannot put in to effect all at once the principles we would like and which we have advocated. Changes must be made gradually, one step at a time, until we get to the point where it is unwise to go further.

The problem of meeting the expenditure of the Dominion of Canada is a very serious one. The late government, while meeting the expenditure in a way, always failed to raise enough money, with the result that the national debt has been increasing from year to year. In my opinion the proper way to stop increasing our national debt is to increase our revenue. We should raise a revenue sufficient to meet our expenses, and I believe the Minister of Finance is making an honest endeavour to solve this problem, which is one of the greatest facing the country today. We hear a lot about reducing the expenditure, and that is certainly a wise thing to do. It is easier to reduce our expenditure than to raise money by way of taxation. I think we could reduce the expenditure in some departments of government, and under the impression that we have a great many more civil servants in the employ of this Government than we need, and if the Government would spend more time in studying the departments with a view to reducing the staffs to the very lowest point consistent with efficiency, I believe they would be able to raise a revenue sufficient to cover the expenditure. At the present time the country is faced with tariffs imposed by other countries. We find that the United States are making a honest endeavour on their part to reduce their tariff, and the same is true of practically every country with which we deal. I venture to say that it would be very unwise, as I am in favour of a low tariff, for the Government at one step to wipe out all the duties on other countries. We must proceed by degrees, and for taking a step in that direction I think the Minister of Finance ought to be commended. While we do not agree with him on all respects I think in the right main he is proceeding in the right direction, and we have no reason to follow him with confidence. The object of every government in this country should be to develop Canada. We have a country with great natural resources. We never been tapped. So far as agriculture is concerned, we have a country which is immensely rich, possibly the richest in the world. We have in the northwest territories perhaps the greatest wheat belt in the world, and if we can get that land—only a small proportion of it is under cultivation at the present time—it will help us to pay off our national debt in a way we otherwise could not do.

But the greatest problem before the country today to my mind, lay great stress upon the home market. There is no one who appreciates the home market more than I do. I represent a constituency in the province of Ontario which has more people to the square mile. I think, than any other rural constituency. I represent the south riding of the country of Waterloo, and we have in that constituency one large city and two or three large towns all within five or six miles of each other. It is a densely populated district. I know and appreciate the value of the home market to the farmer, but unless the products of our farms, practically of no value to us as a means of setting our prices. The prices we get for our farm products are largely fixed by the Chicago and Liverpool markets. They are fixed by our export trade. I believe that one of the greatest things that could be done for agriculture today is for the Government to develop markets for agricultural products. Once you get those markets established, you will find no difficulty in settling our idle acres in the northwest. While this is true of agriculture, it is also perfectly true of other industries. I am not one of those who hold the opinion that large towns and cities are a detriment to any country. I know that some of my friends on this side will not agree with me, but I believe the larger our towns and cities grow and the more people we can get into this country, the better it is for us farmers, providing—and I make this proviso—that those cities do not grow at the expense of any other industry. I am just as much opposed to building up agriculture at the expense of industry as I am to building up industry at the expense of agriculture.

Mr. STEVENS: Does the hon. member believe that industry in this country in the past has been built up at the expense of agriculture? Mr. ELLIOTT (Waterloo): I do, I believe that the towns and cities have been built up at the expense of agriculture.

Mr. STEVENS: Does the hon. member agree with the proposal to remedy that condition by the removal of the tariff? Mr. ELLIOTT (Waterloo): I believe that the lowering of the tariff to a certain point at the present time would be in the interests of agriculture, and also in the interests of industry. Mr. STEVENS: Lowering it to what point? Mr. ELLIOTT (Waterloo): To the point where we have tariff for revenue only. Mr. FIELDING: The hon. member for Vancouver does not seem to see the point. Mr. ELLIOTT (Waterloo): We have a small population, comparatively, in this Dominion, about eight and three-quarter millions. We speak about the value of the home market, but my contention is that if industry does nothing more than supply the wants of these eight and three-quarter millions of people, it is not going to develop to any great extent. You have to get markets outside. You have to establish markets for the products of your factories in other countries. Some of our friends argue that the way to do that is by keeping up a tariff wall around this country and keeping other products out. I venture to say that this is the surest way to kill the industries of this country. If you want to build up the industries of this country you must make the tariff just high enough to give us the revenue we require, and not put a great burden on the consumers of this country. Now the same is absolutely true with regard to agriculture; we produce a great many more goods than we can consume. Our friends who advocate a high tariff will say: "Oh, we will supply you with a home market, which will consume your products." Well, I do not know that the Canadian people could possibly consume all the wheat that is produced in this country—at least I do not think it would be very good for them if they did. Neither could they consume all the cattle that we produce. We have to get export markets; we have to ship our products out into the markets of the world if agriculture is ever to develop.

I do not intend to deal any further with this question of agriculture, but I want to discuss for a few minutes the high cost of living as it affects labour in our towns and cities. To my mind one of the most serious questions which we have to deal with today is the labour problem. We have—very largely, I believe, as a result of the tariff imposed, and the management of the war by the late government—a period of great unemployment. We find that we have more unemployed in Canada today than we ever had before. During the last winter, for a time, fed at the public expense. Hundreds and thousands of others, both men and women, were able, by the use of a little money they had saved up, to worry through the winter. Now what is the condition as we find it here today? We find that labour is not being employed as it should be, and that the coming winter will probably see greater hardship brought on the labour people than they have ever experienced before, simply because those people are standing a second hard year. I think the Government would be well advised to undertake some public work as a relief measure. Ultimately I believe they will have to feed these people; we cannot see them starve. These men do not want charity; they want work; and I believe that ultimately either the provincial or the federal government, or perhaps both, will have to feed this great army of the unemployed during the coming winter.

We find that the cost of living is very little lower than it was before the war. We find that the cost of coal and the necessaries of life, is very little lower than it was before, with the result that it is almost impossible, owing to the small amount of work which these men have had, for them to exist. Now many things have been blamed for it is not guilty. We have men who are looking around for a reason for the high cost of living, will tell you to day that labour is responsible for it. They will tell you that it is because of the high wages they must pay that the cost of living has gone up. In its present position, I believe, however, that if we were to analyse the conditions in a great many of our important industries we would find that labour is not getting an undue reward. At the same time, I wish to say that I believe that in some of our industries in the Dominion, labour, perhaps, is too highly paid, and in this connection I refer to the railway corporations. But coming right down to our factories, I spent a good deal of time at two conditions of labour. I investigated the boot and shoe industry and there are quite a large number of factories in the south riding of Waterloo. We find that labour

is blamed very largely because of the high cost of boots and shoes. Never in the history of Canada, as far as I can remember, has the cost of the raw material which enters into the manufacture of boots and shoes been so low. Why, beef hides were actually selling as low as 2 1/2 and 3 cents a pound; they are a little higher now, perhaps in the neighbourhood of 4 or 5 cents a pound, but these prices are very low. I think that the paupering of the war. Consequently, it cannot be the cost of the raw material that is keeping up the price of boots and shoes. I have a statement made by the secretary of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union of Ontario, Mr. O'Dell, of Hamilton, in which he says that the cost of the labour entering into a pair of shoes which retails at \$12 is only \$1.70. Now, Sir, I maintain that that is not an undue amount to pay for labour; I believe it is only a fair wage. When we consider further that, according to one manufacturer, 14,000 Canadians engaged in the shoe trade receive an aggregate yearly wage of \$10,000,000, this works out at only \$715 each. But footwear never cost so much as it does now. Where does the profit go? I maintain that a wage of \$715 on the average for the shoe workers in the Dominion is not an excessive wage; and I do not think that any fair-minded man can justly charge labour with being responsible for the high cost of shoes.

Permit me to continue a little further on this subject. I have obtained from a very reliable source the cost of the labour entering into the production of a yard of cloth. I might say further that in the south riding of Waterloo we have a number of the finest woolen mills in the Dominion. The figures which are going to be submitted to you with regard to labour are not figures covering one year only, or two years—they are figures covering a period of eight years, so that I think they are fairly correct, and they cover the period in which the cost of woolens was said to be at its very highest. I find that to be the case with respect to the labour entering into the manufacture of a yard of cloth which sells at \$2 per yard to the retailer. The labor, represented by the handling, sorting, blending, picking, scouring, carding, gilling, combing, re-gilling, drawing, spinning, twisting, reeling, and so forth, only receives 30 cents, whereas the yard of cloth which that labor produces retails at \$2. In other words, for a yard of cloth sold by that firm at \$2 per yard the labor cost is only 30 cents. I do not think any of you will say that is an undue charge; and I believe that in this case labor is only receiving a very small part of what it is really worth. You may ask: How is it, in view of the fact that labor is getting such a small reward for this work that the cost of clothing is perhaps higher than it has been for years? Now, it takes about 3 1/2 yards of cloth to make a suit of clothes, and a little over a dollar, to be accurate \$1.12, is paid for the labor which goes into that cloth. No wonder you ask me: "How is it that when we go to buy a suit of clothes manufactured from that cloth, we have to pay somewhere between \$45 and \$50, when the original cost of that cloth to the retailer was only in the neighborhood of \$7?" I venture to say that we never had a greater need for a good active board of commerce in this country to investigate the great cost of these articles than we have at the present time. That is true not only with regard to the articles which I have cited, but of practically every article which goes into human consumption today. There is too great a spread between what we get, what the producer gets, and what the consumer pays. Until we get down to the bottom of that, we will not solve the question of the high cost of living. I want to be fair, and I say that if the tariff on these articles were wiped out completely it would make very little difference in the cost of that statement, but I am satisfied it is perfectly true. The cost is somewhere else, and it is the duty of the Government to find out where the excessive cost of the necessities of life comes in.

I will deal now with the question of the tariff. A good number of elections have been won and lost on the tariff. We find that practically every government, both Liberal and Conservative, has used the tariff as a means of winning elections. In the last campaign our friends to the right said the tariff was the only issue. Well, it did not work out very well, as far as they were concerned. They lost the election, and our friends on the other side of the House won. Now, stripped of all its mystery, very few people thoroughly understand the tariff. We have a plank in the platform of the United Farmers, which is also incorporated in the platform of the Independent Labor party of Canada, which reads: "That the tariff should not be a political football to be kicked about for election purposes, but should be placed in the hands of a qualified and representative commission, whose duty it should be to administer the tariff in a scientific manner, labor then having an opportunity to protect its interests."

This was taken from the labor platform, and further on— "That every claim for tariff protection by any industry should be heard publicly before this proposed commission. Another plank in the platform reads: "That all corporations engaged in the manufacture of products, protected by the customs tariff, should be obliged to publish annually comprehensive and accurate statements of their earnings. I believe in that plank, and I think there are very few members in the House of Commons who know enough of the tariff to say definitely whether or whether it does need protection or whether it does not. I have great respect for the high calibre of the members of this

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