

---

WEDNESDAY, 23RD MARCH, 1870.

---

Hon. MR. WOOD rose to resume the debate on Tariff, and said:—Mr. Chairman, in speaking to the motions now before the House, it will hardly be necessary for me to say that I think this question of Tariff the most important of all that have been introduced during this debate. My object is, as I have said, to reduce to the utmost, in the event of Confederation with Canada, the chance of difference with the Dominion; my objection to Confederation being that, however much it may apparently and at first tend to confer upon the Colony material benefits, yet there is every fear of consequent reaction and disaffection. In dealing with the matter it will be necessary to see whether the subject of Tariff now before us will have the effect of raising a direct question and difference between this Colony and Canada. Tariff is not simply a mode of collecting taxes; it is a system with a double object. The object of obtaining revenue, and in the obtaining of that revenue the further object of promoting domestic and home industries by a just discrimination between the subject-matter on which taxation is levied. The question of Tariff directly tends to promote or depress domestic productions and domestic trade; consequently, the chances of difference and reaction depend on whether our interests are identical with those of Canada, or whether there is a conflict. The intended future Dominion of Canada is obviously divided, so far as this question is concerned, into two parts, that which is to the east and that which is to the west of the Rocky Mountains—the Atlantic and Pacific portions of that Dominion; and to these several divisions there appertain distinct and several industrial interests, agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial. Let us run through in our own minds our own, the Pacific, interests, so to say,—the interests, in fact, of this present Colony. First, we have the agricultural interests. This is a material interest, as I trust it always will be considered in every Colony; it is an industry which a Government cannot well avoid materially to assist. I don't say "protect," but "assist," and this whether agricultural produce be a staple of the Colony or not. I may here remark that I use the word "staple" in what I understand to be the received acceptation of the word—produce, exportable produce, raised in a Colony with advantage and at a remunerative rate to the producer, and capable of being exchanged with advantage for the produce of other countries in the markets of the world. Our next material interests are our own staples, properly so-called as above defined—such, for instance, as the wool of Australia, gold anywhere, or fisheries, as in Newfoundland. Our particular staples are our fisheries, our forests, and our minerals, to say nothing of certain aptitudes for shipbuilding and the repairing of ships. Next, we must take trade and commerce; our local and geographical position being such as to give us some advantage in the distribution of goods, and, as such, is to be regarded as an element of wealth and one of our material interests. Let us now turn to Canada. Canada has manufactures, but not by way of staples, because she cannot undersell the Old World in manufactured goods; but with a population of, I suppose, over three millions she can produce sufficient manufactures of certain descriptions for her own use. Then her staples are agriculture, produce, lumber, and a certain amount of minerals, and perhaps horns and tallow. Agricultural produce is a staple in Canada; she exports it; therefore it requires no protection; it would be no good to impose a tariff upon it. In manufactures there is such a tariff as will slightly protect manufactures, as with us we give the same turn of the market to the farmer by a slight tariff on agricultural produce. Following the common law of self-interest, British Columbia is bound to protect her own interests, and Canada the same. Let us see whether or not there is a manifest tendency to protection in the Dominion Legislature. It has been stated in this debate that Canada is adverse to protection, that she wants to follow England and the Old World in the direction of free trade. I say that those who make the assertion must prove it. ["Hear, hear," from Mr. DeCosmos.] I say that my sources of information tend to show that it is untrue that Canada favours free trade; she desires to protect her own manufactures. Right or wrong as a political theory, new countries will be found, as soon as manufactures are possible, desirous to protect their own native industries, whereas it suits old countries to have free trade. In England manufactured goods are in reality her staples. England can compete with the world in most classes of manufacturing goods, from her manifest advantages in having coal and iron in close proximity, moderately cheap labour, and established industries, to say nothing of the commercial energy of her people. Some of the writers say that America and many of the Colonies of Great Britain suffer from protection. I say that, suffer