

Macdonald Introduces the National Policy

I move: That . . . this House is of the opinion that the welfare of Canada requires the adoption of a National Policy, which, by a judicious readjustment of the Tariff, will benefit and foster the agricultural, the mining, the manufacturing and other interests of the Dominion; that such a policy will retain in Canada thousands of our fellow countrymen now obliged to expatriate themselves in search of the employment denied them at home, will restore prosperity to our struggling industries, now so sadly depressed, will prevent Canada from being made a sacrifice market, will encourage and develop an active interprovincial trade, and moving (as it ought to do) in the direction of a reciprocity of tariffs with our neighbours, so far as the varied interests of Canada may demand, will greatly tend to procure for this country, eventually, a reciprocity of trade.

. . . I say then that, if our manufacturers had a reasonable protection, if they had a hold upon our four millions of people in the same way as the manufacturers in the United States, then there would be a basis whereby they might be enabled to go in by degrees and develop their resources like those of the United States, who, as I have pointed out, can compete with and undersell England in every part of the world. The consequence of carrying out the principle of Free-trade to its utmost extent will prevent capital from being generated to any appreciable degree. As John Stuart Mill said in the celebrated passage so often quoted: the very fact that a nation commenced a particular industry first gives them a control over that industry. By getting the start in this way, capital is generated and a system of manufacture is formed which will prevent any rivals from successfully competing with them. So long as we have a Free-trade system, we can only have substantially one description of industry, and that is agriculture. . . . But no nation has arisen which had only agriculture as its industry. There must be a mixture of industries to bring out the national mind and the national strength and to form a national character. . . .

We must, by every reasonable means, employ our people, not in one branch of industry, not merely as farmers, as tillers of the soil, but we must bring out every kind of industry, we must develop the minds of the people and their energies. Every man is not fitted to be a farmer, to till the soil; one man has a constructive genius, another is an artist, another has an aptitude for trade, another is a skilful mechanic—all these men are to be found in a nation, and, if Canada has only one branch of industry to offer them, if these men cannot find an opportunity in their own

country to develop the skill and genius with which God has gifted them, they will go to a country where their abilities can be employed, as they have gone from Canada to the United States.

Having said so much about a National Policy, I will call the attention of the House to what that policy is. It should consist of a judicious readjustment of the tariff which would benefit and foster the agricultural, the mining, the manufacturing, and other interests of the Dominion; a judicious readjustment of the tariff will mean, to a certain extent, an increased duty upon certain articles; upon those articles which we can produce ourselves, which this country is fit to produce, which our clime can produce, which our people are able to manufacture. . . .

Source: Canada, *Debates of the House of Commons* (December 10, 1880): 28–31.