

the leader of the Opposition, said that Providence had been continuously weeping during the past year over the defeat of his Administration in September, 1911. If that be true—and I entirely disagree that it is true—then judging from the tone of my right hon. friend's utterance and that of my hon. friend the member for Edmonton (Mr. Oliver), Providence is not alone in its sorrow. I think that Providence, in this regard if in no other, has plenty of company among hon. gentlemen opposite. Let me admonish them to cheer up, because, for them as an opposition the worst is yet to come. If they feel so badly about it now, how will they feel while still in opposition five, ten, fifteen or more years from now?

My right hon. friend—and I regret that he is not in his seat—honoured me with his attention concerning the cut which was made in the cement duty during the time of the cement famine last summer. My right hon. friend seemed to be vastly concerned about the principle involved in the reduction in the duty upon cement under the authority of a statute by Order in Council. He entirely overlooked the fact that, only a short time ago, when in power, his government had taken a precisely similar course in connection with the duty upon coal. I rather think that the right hon. gentleman, instead of being concerned as he professed, about the principle underlying the action of the administration, was more concerned about his friend and confidant and chief adviser, the head of the cement merger in Canada. Last year, my first session in this House, this Government was subjected to a constant stream of criticism from hon. gentlemen opposite to the effect that we were identified with the trusts, mergers and combines, and a great deal of such misrepresentation—deliberate and wilful misrepresentation in some cases—was made with regard to myself. Yet the fact remains that this Government has been the first government to serve notice in unmistakable terms, in terms that will not be forgotten, upon the cement merger that, if they desire to retain their market they must be prepared to take care of it, and if they do not take care of it then conditions will be changed so that others will take care of it. My hon. friend made a charge of a very personal nature against myself and against this Government. He charged, in effect, that the Government had made the cut in the cement duty for considerations of what he termed political expediency—

An hon. MEMBER: Hear, hear.

Mr. WHITE (Leeds): My hon. friend says, 'Hear, hear.' Well, when I have

finished he may not say, 'Hear, hear.' The right hon. gentleman made the charge that the Government reduced the duty upon cement by reason of the fact that there was an election pending in Saskatchewan and for the purpose of influencing that election. I understood my hon. friend from Edmonton to make the same charge. I entirely repudiate that charge, and I propose to prove to the satisfaction of this House that the action of the Government was founded upon the highest considerations of public interest and that if they had failed to take the action they did they would have been derelict in their duty.

Upon what evidence did my right hon. friend found his charge? He took a very extraordinary course, a course, for which, I think, he is severely censurable, he took the course of making these charges against myself and against this Government without having taken the trouble to inquire—and he could have easily ascertained,—all the documents in my possession were at his service—upon what the action of the Government was founded. Instead of that, what did he do? He read a letter from a manufacturer of cement published in an obscure journal, based upon the grossest misrepresentation as to what had transpired in an interview between myself and the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Foster) and the cement manufacturers during last winter. He could have obtained, as I have said, the information for the mere asking. Instead of that, he took the extraordinary course of identifying himself with the writer of that communication addressed to the Prime Minister, and vouched, I think, for the substantial truth of its statements, and in that, I say, he is open to the gravest censure. It seems to me an extraordinary thing that a statesman of his experience, an orator of his standing, should descend to become a collector of clippings upon which to found an accusation against a minister or a government.

I do not propose at this stage to deal further with the question of the cement duties, but I hope to lay before this House such evidence as will convince hon. gentlemen on both sides that the action of the Government was not only abundantly justified but absolutely necessary under the circumstances. My hon. friend from Edmonton said that although he was in favour of cement duty reduction, he agreed entirely with the right hon. leader of the Opposition—and no one ever knew my hon. friend from Edmonton to take any different position. No matter what the exigency may be, it is with him a case of follow my leader every time.

My hon. friend (Mr. Oliver) and my right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition