

of Finance says the crisis is over, and that we can be as confident as we were before. And at this very moment, when labour is scarce, and when the purchasing power of the people has been reduced to its lowest point, the cost of all prime necessities of life has risen abnormally. But the Minister of Finance says there is no crisis, and therefore there is nothing for the Government to do. He is not the only one of the ministry who has taken this stand; we have more instances than one to prove that the Government is singularly callous to the present condition of affairs. The Minister of Labour spoke on this subject, giving it as his view that there was absolute prosperity because the prices of commodities were so high. The Minister of Trade and Commerce also gave his opinion on this subject, as published in the Montreal Gazette of the 10th of December last. The reporter says:

Charging that Canadians were extravagant and must correct this weakness as the first step forward in reducing the high cost of living, the Hon. Geo. E. Foster made one of a number of notable speeches here in the Rideau theatre.

Then the reporter puts these words into the mouth of the Hon. George E. Foster:

Referring to the depopulation of the farming districts, Mr. Foster said he would not admit that young men were driven to the cities, but were lured there. He did not favour a commission to investigate the question. 'The Lord knows,' Mr. Foster continued, 'we have had enough commissions. They are as plentiful as blackberries. Commissions are roaming the country wasting good ink and paper preparing reports which are laid on the shelf and nothing done with them. It is not a commission that will right this matter. The action must be taken by the people themselves. Teachers and parents must not only give advice to the young people, but must instruct them to the fact that the oldest industry of agriculture is also the noblest.'

This is good advice, but it was not followed by those to whom it was given, because in a week from that day, I understand, the Government appointed a commission to investigate the high cost of living and the cause of the depopulation of the farming districts. That commission is composed of three gentlemen well known in the city of Ottawa. Mr. McDougald, Commissioner of Customs is the chairman, and in regard to him I have nothing but good to say. He is a most competent and valuable officer. I would say the same of Mr. Coats, who is the assistant Deputy Minister of Labour. Mr. James I do not know so well, but I have good reports of him also. What I want to say, however, is that if this com-

mission is to be effective, if it is to accomplish any good, it should not be entrusted to civil servants. It should not be placed in the hands of the Commissioner of Customs, the assistant Deputy Minister of Labour and the other gentleman. It is evident that they must be restricted in their operations. There is one field into which they cannot enter. If, as many of us suppose, if, as the country supposes—I will not say more than that—the high cost of living is due to political causes, and I believe it is partly due to political causes, will these men dare to investigate that part of the subject? They will not dare to do so; they cannot do so; they are estopped from entering into that field. In appointing that commission, the Government have taken a course which will simply end in nothing. If there is to be an investigation of this kind, it should be placed in the hands of some of the members of the Cabinet—for instance, the Minister of Customs (Mr. Reid), the Minister of Labour (Mr. Crothers), the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Foster)—to mention these three alone—who should travel over the country from Halifax to Vancouver, and hear all classes of the community—producers, consumers, farmers, mechanics, professional men, clergymen, housewives—these last especially, because they are the most interested of all in that question. Nothing of the kind, however, has been done. The task has been entrusted to a commission which, as their report will show, can do only half the work.

We come now to the Speech from the Throne. I was not present, of course, when the Speech was prepared, but I can imagine that my hon. friend the Minister of Finance (Mr. White) must have had a hard task when it came to preparing this part of the Speech:

Canada has been favoured by a long series of prosperous years, and, although at the present moment business is slightly restricted by the financial stringency which prevails throughout the world, I feel convinced that this condition will be merely temporary, and that the boundless resources of this Dominion, which are so fully and universally known and recognized, give us the fullest assurance of continued material prosperity and progress.

When it came to these words:

Canada has been favoured by a long series of prosperous years—

That was hard to fathom, because it was paying a pretty good compliment to the late Administration which had been in office for several years. But when it came to the other words: