

The Address—Mr. Rheaume

Mr. THEODULE RHEAUME (Jacques Cartier) (Translation): In rising, Mr. Speaker, my thoughts very naturally dwell upon my predecessor in this House, the late lamented David Lafortune, who, as the saying goes, died at his post, in full harness, in that court of justice which was particularly dear to him. His whole life was that of the toiler. In all the accepted sense of the word he was "a self-made man." Through hard work, unbending energy and perseverance he climbed to the highest station of life. A veteran of many a contest, he was able to command, together with the admiration of his friends, the respect and esteem of his opponents. A conscientious member, he faithfully served his fellow-citizens, his party and his country, and I believe myself to be the interpreter of the people of Jacques Cartier and of those who knew him when offering to his memory the homage of heartfelt sorrow and everlasting remembrance.

May I now thank the Prime Minister for the honour which he has bestowed on the county of Jacques Cartier by graciously inviting its representative, elected but yesterday and a new comer in this House, to second in French, according to custom, the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

No doubt, all will agree that I should see the justification of this choice in the importance of the riding which has designated me as its representative, a county both industrial and agricultural, synthetizing the economic aspect of the country, where one descends, not far distant from large factories, the finest farms of America.

It is the custom at the opening of parliament, to review briefly the conditions of the country. There was a time when such a survey was easy, when those who were called upon to speak on the Address had but to make a glowing picture of Canada's prosperity, shining proudly amongst nations that knew but abundance; to-day conditions have changed. Nevertheless, even in these years of depression, it seems to me that there is ample reason to cheer up and to have faith when it is seen by unmistakable omens, that Canada, burdened like others by the consequences of the world-wide war, nevertheless maintains its vigour and reveals a more promising future.

Being a young country, it had grounds to fear that its credit might not emerge safely out of this conflict. However, notwithstanding the fabulous amounts spent, the difficulties encountered, the financial steps which it was forced to take re-

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quiring heavy sacrifices from all, it did not founder like so many others. On the contrary: it is pleasing to acknowledge that it quickly recovered and, at present, offers to the world the spectacle of stability auguring well for the future. It seems indeed, from an economic point of view, that our position is, day by day, improving. If agriculture and commerce have reasons to complain, sure signs of recovery are given to us by the statistics which give the measure of our various activities. Our foreign trade maintains itself, notwithstanding the obstacles which have arisen through the custom regulations adopted by our neighbours to the south. For the eight months of the year 1922, from April to November, our trade amounted to \$1,138,175,366. If we compare these figures with those of other years we shall find that, for the same period, we have a surplus of \$124,000,000 over 1921. By taking into account the depreciation in values, we can verify that our external trade is very gratifying since the quantities are at least being maintained, when they are not on the increase.

Those who attach some importance to the net balance of trade have learned, no doubt with pleasure, that our exports of Canadian products have increased from \$502,152,675 for the eight months of the year 1921, to \$621,705,316 for the eight months of the year 1922, while our imports have but slightly increased, in fact just by a little over \$4,000,000, leaving a balance in favour of exports in national products of more than \$114,000,000.

This balance in our favour added to the one of our foreign credits, has contributed to restore our exchange which in the end went up to par, after dropping as low as an adverse —19 per cent. We do not positively state that it will maintain that level, nevertheless we are led to believe that this established parity between the American money and ours is to us the indication of a fortunate state of affairs and is reassuring to trade.

If agriculture, particularly, is still suffering from the depreciation in values, at least it rejoices in a crop which no past figure has ever reached and which was transported to outside markets with extraordinary rapidity. These favourable conditions combined with the able administration of the late lamented Minister of Railways were responsible, no doubt, for the progress noticed in our National Railways.

Thanks to the recent initiative taken by the government, we are in hopes that our National Railways will succeed in extricating themselves from the difficulties which they have encountered within the last years.

There is a French proverb which says: "Quand le bâtiment va, tout va". It