

and people in the most remote districts, my remarks were well received. I was listened to not only with courtesy, but with sympathy, and the opinions and ideas which I gave expression to were received with approbation by the people of my province. These meetings were held with no political object in view, and it is scarcely necessary for me, I hope, to deny the unworthy allegation made in some quarters, that, under the guise of holding patriotic meetings, we were holding political meetings in which to expound the principles of the Conservative party. I believe that under the system of Government under which we live it is the duty of the ministers of the Crown to visit from time to time the different parts of the country, and more particularly the different parts of the provinces they represent, so that there may be a bond of sympathy and union between the ministers of the Crown and the people whom they represent. I believe that in that respect we should take a leaf from the book of the great English statesmen, who are continually speaking to their constituents. That is the reason why I thought it was incumbent upon me, and why my colleagues in the Government from the province of Quebec thought it was incumbent on them to explain directly to the people the real position of affairs, so that they might judge for themselves of the action and conduct of the Government. It is true, Sir—and I must tell the whole truth—that at these meetings I defended the Government from what I considered to be unfounded and unfair attacks; but on no occasion did I make any attack on my political opponents, or introduce any controversial matter. It was not that I think the case we Liberal-Conservatives are called upon to defend is not a good case; not that I think there is no cause of complaint in respect to the opinions held on the other side; but it was that I did not think the occasion warranted any controversy. It was because that I sincerely believe that the only subject that should occupy the attention of our people at the present time is this war in which the very existence of this country is at stake.

I wish, Sir, to render justice to whom justice is due. It was not only the Conservative ministers who held patriotic meetings in the province of Quebec. The right hon. leader of the Opposition (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) held such meetings, some of which I had the honour to attend. The hon. member for Rouville (Mr. Lemieux),

[Mr. Casgrain.]

and the hon. member for Bonaventure (Mr. Marcil) also took part in patriotic meetings. I regret, however, that others who should know better did not follow their leaders, but gave expression to opinions in some distant parts of the country which were not in consonance with the expressions which fell from the lips of their leaders. But, so as not to detract from the tone of this debate, which has been conducted on higher than party lines, I shall say no more on this at present, leaving to another and perhaps less dignified occasion its discussion.

What struck me most in these meetings in the province of Quebec which I attended was the manifest prosperity of the farmers. Everywhere we went we saw evidences of this great prosperity. I well remember that at a large meeting in the constituency of my hon. friend from Chicoutimi and Saguenay (Mr. Girard), at which there were present at least three thousand people, in that new country, which but a few years ago was nothing but a forest, we saw the farmers coming to the meetings in their automobiles and in carriages drawn by teams of splendid horses. Everywhere was to be found convincing proof to our friends from the other provinces, should they come to visit us, that Quebec is one of the most prosperous provinces in the Dominion.

Mr. PROULX: That was the result of Liberal rule.

Mr. CASGRAIN: I do not agree with my hon. friend. When we were in these more remote districts of the province of Quebec, we seemed to be very far indeed from the scene of the war. The residents have not yet felt the touch of the war; and such was the prosperity and peace which prevailed that we could not help thinking that even more than three thousand miles separated us from the theatre of hostilities. It has been said by an hon. member in this debate that recruiting was not quite so rapid in the province of Quebec and the eastern provinces as in the West. But let me point out that with the first contingent we sent 2,500 French-Canadians. Let me mention to my hon. friends the names of some of the officers who are serving in this war. At present we have in Canada Colonels Dansereau, Barré, Derosiers, Majors De Serres and Ranger, and Captains Leprohon and Roy, who have returned to Canada from the front and who are either organizing new battalions or otherwise help-