

# THE BUDGET DEBATE.

## SPEECH BY PROF. G. E. FOSTER, M.P.

The following is a full report of the speech delivered in the House of Commons on Thursday evening April 5th, 1883, by Mr. FOSTER, Member for King's County, New Brunswick.

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Mr. SPEAKER,—If the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat had occasion to ask the kind indulgence of this House for the remarks which he, an old member, proposed to address to it, on the ground that the debate was well worn, and that the patience of the House had been somewhat taxed, I think I may be pardoned if I ask a still greater measure of indulgence, on the ground of my inexperience in dealing with such matters as these, on account of my being a new member, and of having to follow in this debate after the very able speeches delivered on this side, and the lengthy criticisms which have been given on that side of the House. I suppose that as long as we maintain our present political system we shall be obliged, for a time at least, to conduct our affairs in Parliament by what is known as the machinery of party Government. It is, perhaps, an evil incident, but not essential to party Government, that the country must be divided into two hostile camps, and that in Parliament we must have the generals and leaders of those two hostile camps pitted against each other—often more anxious, I am afraid, to gain an advantage over each other than to be strictly careful as to the work which is necessary to be done.

I acknowledge, too, that the functions of an Opposition are rather difficult. It will not do for them too much to agree with what has been done by the Government to which they are opposed. Necessarily to their position they must first fault, they must criticise, and after y has passed upon year, it is not to be wondered at that this fault finding spirit comes to be somewhat chronic, and those who are so fortunate as for a long period of time to sit upon the Government side of the House ought to have, I think, a great deal of charity and consideration for those in the unfortunate circumstances I have mentioned, and which are incident to a long service in Opposition. The members on the Opposition benches have, as I stated, necessarily to criticise

and find fault. I must say that I was somewhat puzzled to know how they would proceed, or what they would find fault about, after the very excellent setting forth of the financial affairs of this country by the hon. Finance Minister, and after the very lucid explanation which he gave of the figures which had appeared in the Public Accounts. After having looked carefully over those Public Accounts, and knowing fairly well

### THE CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY,

I confess that it was difficult for me to imagine what particular grounds the Opposition would take.

I have noticed the Budget debates in the British Parliament; I have noticed the Budget debates in the Congress of the United States, and I have found that some great mistake in public policy, some defeat of armies, some disaster which had befallen the country either at home or abroad, or some question of imminent fiscal change, is the matter which is chiefly brought up and relied upon with reference to a criticism of the speech from the representative First Minister. But, sir, in this country we have none of these. Our country is at peace. All over it, from British Columbia to Cape Breton, a peaceful feeling seems dominant and uppermost.

Nova Scotia is perfectly happy, enjoying herself upon the proceeds of the better terms which were gained in 1869, and has ceased to grumble. Prince Edward Island is quiet, and the only disturbance upon its political horizon is the contested election in the celebrated King's County case. New Brunswick, as usual, is good-tempered and steady. Ontario, as the critic of the hon. Finance Minister's speech has stated, is prosperous, and the war cloud which arose there not many months ago, and grew to be, at least, as large as a man's hand, and which was materialized, I think, probably for political purposes, has again been dissipated and no longer appears to view. Manitoba, which raised, or rather