

ably with those other countries with whom we compare and with whom chiefly we compete. In 1921 we suffered with them reaction from the inflation of war. But we suffered no more than they. The numbers of our unemployed were indeed less by half proportioned to our population; the industrial disturbance was less severe.

Then came the period of tariff bombardment, tariff threatenings, trumpeting and the blowing of horns. Two parties contrived to control this House—or rather one party with two divisions and two names. The great body of the one and a small portion of the other believed in tariff destruction. The other portion who believed in a protective tariff was lulled into acquiescence by the prospect of a political triumph and by equivocal assurances of apostasy given by the Liberal leader. The Laurier-Fielding tariff was the banner held aloft in industrial Canada. The 1919 platform was the battle-cry down the concessions and through the prairie West. As was inevitable both groups of followers have been betrayed. We have not in Canada to-day either the one policy or the other. In fact we have no policy at all. We have had a process of tariff hacking, chipping and tinkering—in fidelity as declared by the honourable member for Waterloo—in fidelity to no principle whatever. We have had nothing but a bartering of tariff concessions on the auction block, the victim industry chosen every time with an eye to political support; with an ear tuned to the division bell. Every day this chamber has rung with denunciation of our fiscal system even from the ranks of the government, loud vauntings about the goal of free imports, threatenings and slaughter breathed out by three ministers in succession—stability promised a year ago, the death-knell of protection to-day. This is the melancholy record of two and one-half years of power.

What would honourable gentlemen expect?—I appeal to the business men of this House—what would you expect would be the consequence on industry? There is alarm, there is dismay, there is a stoppage of expansion; there is depression. The United States strengthened their tariff defences three years ago and sprang forward after '21. They have enjoyed a wave of prosperity the most abundant in their history, not universal but almost universal in its sweep. For the first time we have failed to share even a reflex of that prosperity. The industries which this government has attacked have languished. Speaking generally those only have prospered who have engaged in selling our crops

[Mr. Meighen.]

which fortunately have been heavy and in selling our natural resources and those dependent on them. To-day every member of this House knows that the feeling through Canada is anything but wholesome or hopeful. The barometer of migration is ominous. From the city, from the town, from the factory, from the farm, the procession is distressing. A year ago its volume suddenly rose to three times its normal dimensions. And still they go. Their numbers may diminish with the saturation of the United States—but are we making work for them in Canada? We are circumscribing the area of employment every day. The inevitable consequences are upon us. Capital alarmed, business harassed, production dislocated, agriculture unassisted, labour contracted, tens of thousands of our children exiled, the debt heavier, taxation multiplied, the budget juggled, these are the reappings of thirty months of this government, the cruel cost to date of its brief and inglorious career.

What this country needs the bitter lesson of experience is teaching now as never before. First and fundamentally Canada needs a protective policy consistently and unflinchingly pursued. Canada needs a fearlessly Canadian policy—a national policy in the sense that Macdonald conceived it, in the sense that Laurier maintained it. Long enough have we trifled with this thing: long enough have we flirted with theories suited only to a non-existent world to a world where all conditions are alike, all production on equal scale, all labour of equal standard, all markets open, all currencies at par, or suited at best to a country the very antithesis of our own. The time is coming now to settle this question, and to settle it for good. A right fiscal policy is vital to any country; it is a thousand times vital to Canada. For our part we welcome the issue. Almost anything would be better than what we have now. We are in a condition of anxious enervating suspense, industry crouching under a sword tossed between two leaders in this House, a state of perpetual premonition, a sort of endless thunder and lightning betokening a destructive storm. The Conservative party is for protection—for the farm, the mine, the factory, the whole of Canada. To those of other parties in this House I say, you are either for protection or against it. If you are against protection say so and draw your sword against it. Do not talk about tolerating it or palliating it;—if it is wrong, get rid of it and the sooner the better. On the other hand, if you are for protection stand up and say so and join the ranks of its defenders. Do not camouflage your colours by talking