

Mr. KENNY. Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that in these concluding years of this century the nations of the world enjoy a greater measure of liberty than at any previous period of the world's history. To-day in all parliaments and amongst all peoples, the Budget debate is the one which excites the greatest interest in the nation. In discussing it we pass in review not only the expenditure and income of the past year, and the estimate of the expenditure and income of the year to come, but we have under consideration also the fiscal policy of the Government of the day as well as that propounded by the Opposition. We have placed before us the policies which actuate the political parties in the country. The past two years have been years of remarkable and great depression unprecedented in the world's history, and in this Dominion of ours, we have felt it, as described by the Toronto "Globe," "in diminished force." During the course of this debate, hon. gentlemen opposite in criticising the remarks which have been made on this side of the House, have questioned the accuracy of the statement that the condition of the agricultural labourers and of the working classes in free-trade England was unsatisfactory. Sir, in proof of the agricultural depression which exists in England, I beg to call the attention of the House to the following sentence which appeared in the Queen's Speech at the opening of the Imperial Parliament :

I regret that agriculture continues to be in a seriously depressed condition. The subject is still under the consideration of the commission appointed in the autumn of 1892. In the meantime the proposal will be submitted to you for facilitating the construction of light railways, a measure which I trust will be beneficial to the rural districts.

We have here, Sir, in the most formal manner, placed before the Imperial Parliament, the statement that the condition of agriculture in Great Britain is so unsatisfactory that a Royal Commission has been sitting two years, has not yet made its report, and meanwhile the Imperial Government, in order to give some aid to agriculture, and to help the rural districts of England, has taken the unusual step of assisting in the construction of light railways. This is most convincing evidence that the condition of agriculture in England is unprecedentedly bad, and that free trade has not benefited the farmers of Great Britain. It is also within the knowledge of hon. gentlemen, that in England, since the present Parliament met, so great are the numbers of unemployed people that a select committee, presided over by Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, one of the members of the Cabinet, has been appointed to take into consideration the condition of the unemployed in England. When the members of that commission had taken evidence and considered the question,

they did not feel justified in making any suggestion to Parliament, but they simply presented the evidence and left to Parliament the responsibility of dealing with this serious question. This condition of the population of England is a matter of extreme regret to us, but it is natural that we should take it into consideration when comparisons are instituted between the policy of protection which prevails in Canada and the United States, and the policy of free trade which prevails in England. The depression of the last few years has had its influence upon Canada, although as described by the Toronto "Globe" it has been felt here with diminished force. Hon. gentlemen opposite, and especially the hon. member for South Oxford (Sir Richard Cartwright), have attempted to convey the impression to the House that the depression which existed between the years 1874 and 1878, was greater than the depression which prevails throughout the world to-day. I do not believe such to be the case, but whether that be so or not, at all events it is satisfactory to us who have supported the policy which has prevailed in Canada for the last fifteen years that the condition of the Canadian people in these past two years of depression has been infinitely better than it was in the years from 1874 to 1878. I know that the hon. member for South Oxford contends, and he has made the statement during the course of this debate, that the condition of the population of Canada, especially in the five older provinces, was better from 1874 to 1878 than it is to-day. He made the assertion; he gave us no proofs and I think that is not the generally accepted opinion of the people of Canada. In fact, I do not believe it is the opinion of the hon. members of this House, no matter on which side of the Speaker they may sit. But the result of the depression in Canada has been that our expenditure has exceeded our income, and there is a deficit. The hon. Minister of Finance, in the admirable speech which he made in introducing the Budget, informed the House that he intended to make immediate provision to meet that deficit; and the bold and courageous policy he then announced commends itself to the country. I had not the pleasure of hearing the speech, but it seemed to be a surprise to the financial critic of hon. gentlemen opposite, the hon. member for South Oxford. Indeed it had such an effect upon that hon. gentleman that for the moment he seemed to have lost his power of speech, and he had to ask for an adjournment of the House, in order that he might have time to recover from the effect of that announcement. As a citizen of Canada as a member of this House, I congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance upon the policy he adopted in courageously meeting the deficit in the manner