

ment's estimates which amounted to \$8,000,000 in 1891, came to \$19,000,000 in 1914, and so forth. I shall go no further, for what I have just stated is sufficient to show or rather to remind us that the war expenditures were not the only cause nor the beginning of our deplorable financial situation. The Borden government in 1912 and 1913, witnessed a serious crisis, following a series of fifteen years of prosperity.

The Conservative government of that date admitted this crisis themselves, since in the Speech from the Throne, at the opening of the session, in January, 1914, they made the Governor General say:

Canada has been favoured by a long series of prosperous years. (This was a compliment to the preceding Laurier government, which had been at the helm of the country's affairs during a number of years.)

At the present moment business is slightly restricted by the financial stringency.

As a consequence of this crisis, the farming class complained then, and not without cause, of the dearth of farm labour and the lack of markets for agricultural products.

Everybody was complaining at that time of the high cost of living which had increased 50 per cent in Canada. And still the government made no move to meet such a crisis. That is why Sir Wilfrid Laurier, then leader of the Liberal opposition, moved to have the following words added to the Speech from the Throne of January, 1914:

We regret to have to represent to your Royal Highness that in the gracious speech with which you have met Parliament, whilst it is admitted that business is in a depressed condition, yet there is no indication of any intention on the part of your advisers to take any steps towards relieving such a situation.

Such was the unfit and wasteful government which had the administration of public affairs during the war.

At that critical period, the Tory government's financial policy might have been summed up in the following words: "a continuous resort to loans"—a dangerous policy, because it incited to an everlasting wastefulness—a very short-sighted policy, because the continuous recurring loans have largely contributed to place us in the critical situation in which we are struggling, and are closely linked—even in peace time—with the constant increase of the cost of living. Furthermore, the Tory government had to resort to taxation, in addition to the loans, that makes up the whole of their financial scheme; it is simple and ruinous.

Let me, Sir, dwell a few moments on the war expenditure.

The Liberals are sometimes told: You are [Mr. Prevost.]

as guilty as the Tories and you equally share with them the responsibility of our financial mess since, in the House, you approved of all the war expenditure without a protest.

Such are not the facts. Certainly, the Liberals were not opposed to Canada taking part in the war. Our country could not remain neutral in the great struggle without losing its self-respect; the Liberals only performed their duty when voting the money necessary under the circumstances. However, they always stipulated that our participation in the war should be voluntary and reasonable. Among these war expenditures, some are legitimate and reasonable of which the Liberals, without fear, shoulder their share of responsibility. But they ceaselessly protested against the wastefulness of the Tory government. Look up Hansard for 1915, 1916, 1917 and 1918, and you will find therein the protests and criticisms of the Liberal opposition in regard to the scandalous war contracts, such as the contracts for remounts, boots, uniforms, equipment, drugs, shells, rifles, etc.; contracts that enriched the partisans of the Tory government from the sacred funds voted for the war. Two Conservative members were even forced to resign following the Liberal charges. The latter never ceased denouncing the reckless way the Tory government threw us into the war heedless of all bounds of sense of proportion, without any consideration for our interests or our needs.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier consistent with himself and true to his policy of wise and reasonable participation in the world war, stated in the House, July 24, 1917:

But the question is how many men we can take from the life of the nation at the present time without imperilling the public services which are essential to this country, and essential to carry on our share of the war. This is a subject which, in my humble opinion has not been sufficiently considered by the government. They went into this war without taking any previous calculation whatever, without taking any census of our resources in men and in other respects.

A few days later, in a letter which Sir Wilfrid Laurier wrote, August 21, 1917, to Mr. Frank Wise, Secretary to the League "Win the War" at Toronto the Canadian statesman expressed himself as follows:

In the new Parliament I hold that it must be the duty of the majority leader, whoever he may be: to confer immediately with Great Britain and her Allies, with a view to ascertaining how, and to what extent, the participation can be utilized to the greatest advantage in the prosecution of the war, regard being had, on the one hand, to the necessities of the Allies for men, and, on the other hand, to our population, resources, industries, geographical and other considerations.