

The Address—Mr. Mackenzie King

and they search the speech in vain for anything that promises a ray of hope in solving the questions with which they are most concerned?

These words, Mr. Speaker, might appear to be of some force and effect had they not appeared in one form or another in every speech from the throne which has been read by His Excellency since the present administration came into office. Listen to what the Prime Minister through His Excellency has been saying at the succeeding sessions of parliament. In the present speech he says, "conditions are improving, we are approaching prosperity." Let us go back to the opening of the special or first session on September 8th, 1930, just two years and a month ago. I quote from the speech from the throne of that session:

The necessity for dealing with exceptional economic conditions with the resultant unemployment has induced me to summon you at an earlier date than would otherwise be necessary. Measures will be submitted for your consideration, including amendments to the Customs Act and the customs tariff, which it is anticipated will do much to meet the unusual conditions which now prevail.

I ask you to take note of the language because it sets forth what at the time in the opinion of the Prime Minister—what I believe he honestly believed—was the remedy, but which now we know to have been a main contributing cause of increased unemployment. The government, he says, will make amendments to the Customs Act and the customs tariff. I say that those amendments to the Customs Act and the customs tariff, by the restriction of trade which they have brought about, have done more than anything else to increase unemployment and rural distress in our country.

In the speech of His Excellency, at the end of the first session, at prorogation on September 22nd, just two weeks after the previous statement, there are but two paragraphs. The first reads:

I thank you for the prompt consideration which you have given to the measures submitted to you, and which are deemed necessary for the relief of unemployment in the dominion. It is my fervent hope and confident belief that these measures will prove effective in accomplishing the purposes for which they have been enacted.

That was two years ago. The Prime Minister believed that the increases he had made in the tariff and the powers he had given the governor in council would prove effective and helpful in solving the problem of unemployment. He knows now that they have proved the very opposite, because conditions are worse now than they were two years ago.

Take the second session, opening on March 12, 1931, five and a half months after
[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

the one to which I have just referred; a year and six and a half months ago. In the speech from the throne it was said:

It will be your privilege to consider certain measures designed by my ministers to ameliorate existing conditions, to provide further means by which our people may go forward to achieve a prosperity hitherto unattained and to furnish them with all possible safeguards against a recurrence of the present subordination to world forces. . . .

My government has explored the origins of our difficulties and is firmly of the belief that many of our problems do not arise out of world wide depression, but are antecedent to it; and that domestic factors have also largely determined the degree of economic distress from which this country is suffering.

Exactly what we have been saying in the recent past. It has not been world forces so much as domestic conditions, aggravated by the measures which my right hon. friend initiated, and the futility of which in large measure he is now obliged to admit. Here is what he said, after having examined the origins and causes of the conditions then obtaining:

It was this belief which impelled my ministers at the emergency session of parliament held in September last to remove one of the root weaknesses in our industrial system by effecting such then possible changes in the tariff as would, in their opinion, provide substantial security against harmful world competition. Although in the interval world conditions have changed but little for the better, this tariff legislation has resulted in a marked improvement in the domestic situation through the strengthening of established industries, and in addition many others, formerly exporters to Canada, have now become producers in Canada.

After reading this, we know how much importance to attach to some of the assertions which under the present administration make their appearance in a speech from the throne; then follows:

The operation of the Unemployment Relief Act, 1930, has proved equally beneficial. While the grant authorized by this act could not immediately have checked unemployment arising from causes of which you have full knowledge, yet its careful administration by my ministers, ably aided by the provincial and municipal governments and the two great railway systems, has resulted in the institution of a nation wide program of public undertakings, each one a unit in a scheme of national development, which have collectively provided work for the greatest number of men who have ever been employed through the direct efforts of the federal government.

Think of that! Praising the institution of a great nation-wide program of public undertakings, each a unit in a scheme of national development—that was the thing that was saving the country that day. And to-day it, too, as a policy, is all thrown to the winds. No more schemes of national