

years have been made towards colonization and towards the fuller development of our varied resources. It is most satisfactory also to know that almost every branch of industry in this country is to-day flourishing. I have before me recently compiled figures relative to the trade of this Dominion which would furnish a most interesting theme did time permit me to discuss them, but I shall refrain from doing so as hon. members will be able to see these figures in the departmental returns. However, Sir, common every-day experience in the business world will establish far more clearly than statistics or returns would ever prove, that the golden era of prosperity in this country, which dawned shortly after this administration attained power—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Every day experience in the business world proves that the golden era of prosperity shows up to the present time no apparent sign of diminution, but on the contrary, Canadians may look forward to even vaster and more profitable commercial operations in the future than they have enjoyed in the past. I am well aware, Sir, that it is a vexed question as to what precise degree of credit the administration of the day is entitled to for the very happy surroundings which we now see on all sides. I do not know that any useful purpose can be served by an examination of the facts with the view of ascertaining just what the legitimate claims of the government are in that respect. I assume, Sir, that the government itself rests content with the knowledge, not only that its fiscal policy has received the approval of the great bulk of the community, but likewise with the knowledge that it must have received a considerable degree of approval even in the estimation of those who seemingly opposed it. It was approved at least to this extent: that its opponents did not see fit to offer any well defined alternative policy of their own but rather contented themselves with a desultory and indefinite sort of criticism of the general and detailed policy of the administration. I am well aware that I would enter upon highly contentious ground if I were to attempt a discussion of these much-debated subjects. However, I believe I may be permitted to remark in passing, that no matter how marked may be the division of opinion upon the government's rightful dues in these respects, upon another phase of the question, there is a singular unanimity of opinion in Canada, and that is, that if the course of those who are opposed to the policy of the government has in any degree whatever contributed to the general prosperity, it is in a degree so minute as to be quite imperceptible.

Mr. GUTHRIE.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it is a well recognized fact that there is a certain peculiar spirit of generosity which frequently pervades the mind of the victor in the hour of his victory, and I think the hon. members on this side of the House will be generous enough and candid enough to acknowledge the many grave difficulties which involved their opponents and against which their opponents were compelled to contend, not only in the recent general election, but likewise in the general election of 1896. We will remember that in 1896 our opponents were a government battling against adversity and in 1900 they were an opposition battling against prosperity. While there was a marked similarity in the difficulties of the two situations, there was a marked dissimilarity in the conditions under which they were forced to contend. I am satisfied that neither of these difficult positions—neither that of 1896 nor that of 1900—was the result of deliberate choice, these were rather the result of what I might term the admixture of fault and of misfortune. It was largely fault in 1896, and it was largely misfortune in 1900 which compelled hon. gentlemen opposite to labour under those unfavourable conditions. At this distance of time we have probably grown more candid than we were immediately after the event and I think it will now be readily assented to on all hands, that if the prevailing commercial distress in Canada for two or three years prior to 1896 was not wholly the result, it was very largely the result of the misdirected efforts of the Conservative administration of that day. And though we may not as readily admit it to-day, I believe that in two or three years, when we have grown more candid, we will admit that the very marked prosperity in Canada to-day, if not entirely, is very largely the result of the well-directed efforts of the administration of this day. Of hon. members opposite one might be permitted to say that their difficulty as a government in 1896 was to excuse adversity, while their difficulty as an opposition in 1900 was to explain away prosperity; and in order to achieve this end with as little injury as possible to the credit of the government of 1896 and to allow as little credit as possible to the government of 1900, they boldly proclaimed to the people that these very wide-apart conditions of commerce in this country were not the result of the acts or omission of any government, but were entirely the result of the prevailing trade conditions throughout the world. Their argument in a reduced form was simply this, that depression throughout the world renders Canadian success impossible, and commercial prosperity throughout the world renders depression in this country impossible. Now, Sir, while that argument might be applied to some countries, it is, in my humble opinion in the case of Canada, a thoroughly fallacious and