

Britain is not able to-day to finance for what she absolutely needs from this country in the way of these products, and if it is to be done Canada must do it. Canada is prepared to do it to the utmost of her power—is doing it to-day and is organizing to do it in the future. Yonder in the West is a possible wheat crop with a surplus of anywhere between 100,000,000 and 200,000,000 bushels. If Great Britain does not buy that wheat, who will? If Great Britain does buy that wheat Great Britain must finance, and perhaps very largely through Canada herself. And yet here are gentlemen who plead with tears in their voices that we should keep up the munitions factories, and let our wheat lie in the elevators or on the prairies of the West. My right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) smiles. Well, a smile often betokens—but I will not characterize it. I say that no man who knows the facts of the whole financial situation so far as Canada is concerned, and its bearing upon this war, will smile when a minister makes the statements I have made here to-day. They are statements of the utmost gravity, which must sink into the hearts of the Canadian people, and which one day will make them feel very differently towards this matter than they do even at the present time. I am sorry I have been led into making these extended remarks. I do not pretend to convince these gentlemen.

Mr. PUGSLEY: You omitted the Canadian Northern obligations.

Mr. LEMIEUX: And the Quebec and Saguenay railway.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: I did that very largely out of sympathy—

Mr. PUGSLEY: Not forgetfulness.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER:—with my hon. friends opposite. Yet they occupy the fortunate position of having led this country into a cul de sac, and then sit back and laugh at those who must make their way out.

Mr. OLIVER: Whatever question there might have been in the mind of any one in the House as to the importance of the discussion precipitated by the hon. member for Pictou, there can be no question whatever as to its importance now; after the speech of the Minister of Trade and Commerce. The question of the ability of the British Empire to finance this war is surely big enough to engross the attention

[Sir George Foster.]

of the Canadian Parliament for an hour or two, and if that is properly a part of this discussion, then surely this discussion is more than justified. Even the Canadian Parliament can afford to take a little time in discussing a matter of such stupendous importance and interest. But, as a matter of fact, what the Canadian Parliament is

here for is to take care of the finances of Canada, and of the business and industry of Canada; to take care that Canada does not lose her place in the race of progress, whether there is war or whether there is peace. And if the burden is all the greater when war is on, that only means that the Government and Parliament of Canada are charged with greater responsibility now than when peace prevails. Their business is to see that the best is done that can be done on behalf of Canada in her war operations, and in those peace operations which must necessarily succeed, if war is to be successfully maintained. Our efforts in active warfare are absolutely dependent upon our conditions of industry and production and taxpaying power at home, and the member of the Government who presumes to lead the consideration of Parliament away from that patent fact in describing the glories and the responsibilities of the British Empire is simply trying to avoid the question at issue.

The question at issue is a very simple one. A great industry in Canada is being shut down in part. The hon. member for Pictou has stated that several hundreds, if not thousands, of his constituents have been thrown out of employment in the last few weeks, as a result of authority issued by the Imperial Munitions Board. That, I submit, is a matter of most supreme importance to the hon. member for Pictou, and if it is an indication of what is to take place throughout the Dominion, it is a matter of supreme importance to this Parliament and is entitled to the very best consideration that Parliament can give it. The country, I submit, is entitled to the very fullest information that can be given on this question—entitled to something entirely different from the broad generalizations, the glittering generalities that have been handed out to the House and the country by the two ministers who have already spoken.

It is a fact that several munitions plants in Canada have been shut down, and it is a fact that the announcement from the Imperial Munitions Board is to the effect that