

House, and the very best evidence that those propositions were acceptable to the country. But, before commencing to address himself specially to that resolution, he hoped he might be permitted to review briefly, as briefly as the case would admit, the circumstances in which we were placed by the condition of the country, which had conducted very largely to the adoption of the policy now brought forward by his hon. friend the Finance Minister. He (Mr. Plumb) became a member of Parliament at the time of the great political revolution which removed from this body a large number of the gentlemen who had before led its legislation in this House. He came here a stranger to the usages of the House, comparatively a stranger to the grave questions then under discussion; and almost the first important debate in the House, in that Session, was upon the fiscal condition of the country, opened by the Budget speech of the gentleman who succeeded his hon. friend the present Finance Minister, and had been succeeded by him. Those of them who then, for the first time, were brought face to face here with the arrogant representatives of the triumphant party, which had swept the country as by a deluge from Prince Edward Island to Manitoba, were somewhat astounded at the propositions and arguments of the hon. gentleman who then held the purse-strings. They had supposed, in their ignorance and innocence, perhaps, that the country had been, for many years, under Conservative rule, in a state of great prosperity; that the gentlemen who formed the Confederation of the Provinces, who had laid broad and deep its foundations, who had made it one of the powers of the earth, and one of the principal appanages of the great Crown upon which we were proud to be dependent, had done something towards advancing the interests of the country; but they learned, from the hon. member for Centre Huron, that they had been recreant to all the best interests of Canada, had squandered her resources, had made reckless bargains with the different Provinces in order to sustain their waning popularity, that they had heaped burdens upon Canada which she never could sustain; they were told all this by one who was lauded by the party then in power as

a great financial authority, and who spoke as the mouthpiece of that party. They were told constantly at every great meeting held for the purpose of influencing electors, as well as upon the floor of this House, that their friends, when in power, increased the public expenditure from \$13,500,000 in 1867, to \$23,316,316 in 1873-74. They were told that this was something so reprehensible, that those who were responsible for it should be for ever thereafter shut out from the management of public affairs; that they deserved to be ostracised because they had met the necessities of the growing Dominion with a statesmanlike and generous liberality. Increasing in population, wealth, and commerce with unparalleled rapidity, demanding outlays for perfecting the machinery of the new Confederation, for legislation, for the militia, for the collection of revenue, for the protection of the shipping trade, for the opening and peaceful occupation of the North-West, for public buildings adapted to the needs and the dignity of the Dominion, for the administration of justice, with ample and constantly augmenting revenues to meet such demands, the Conservative leaders would have been recreant to the trust confided to them, if they had adopted a niggardly or short-sighted method in dealing with the public expenditure. No one who sat on the Opposition benches in those days—and many of those gentlemen were here now before him in the same position—had opposed that policy to which he had just referred. The general principle upon which the expenditure was based was fully conceded on all sides; but little discussion arose upon the Budget during successive years from 1867 until 1873. Sir John Rose, during his financial Administration, finding the expenditure growing more rapidly than the revenue seemed to warrant, set a memorable example to those who came after him by cutting down his Estimates to meet the necessity. His able successors in the administration of the finances, prior to 1874, found no such need. They might be well assured that they would have met it had it occurred in a way to preserve the public credit from the damaging effect of yearly increasing deficits. The Opposition of the day contented themselves with a few unimportant criticisms