

*The Budget—Mr. Meighen*

Mr. CRERAR: I dislike very much interrupting my right hon. friend, but the exodus to the United States was started long before; in fact the figures he quoted in the debate on the Address showed that. Now he states he would raise the duties that have been lowered. Does he think the tariff as a whole is too low and would he raise it in order to stop the exodus?

Mr. MEIGHEN: If the hon. gentleman refers to every schedule and every article, I can answer him. It is safe to say that in my judgment many of the duties are plenty high enough, but the influence of this government upon others has been injurious.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. MEIGHEN: What is the matter with hon. gentlemen? Every time they put their hands to the statute book they write sentences of idleness and expulsion against many people of this country. The hon. member for Marquette (Mr. Crerar) says there was emigration before. Certainly there was, and there will always be emigration; but when you find it increased nearly three times over from one month to another, and hold the high level throughout a whole year, it is a pretty serious matter to seriously minded men. And I fancy when you are able to trace the men thrown out of employment in factories as respects the products of which the duties were lowered, trace them into the States by the hundreds, you can find the reason they fell out of work and the reason they left the country.

I do not advocate a high protective tariff, but I advocate a tariff that is protective. I advocate a tariff that, being protective, is fairly and equitably protective, and not a gerrymandered system such as the government now presents.

Mr. GOULD: Is it not a fact that after 1920, when the right hon. gentleman was leading the government, we had the longest bread line ever known in the history of Canada?

Mr. MEIGHEN: No, it is not a fact by any means. In 1921 there was considerable unemployment. When you get 400,000 or 500,000 men coming back all at once from Europe where they had been fighting for their country, you will likely find considerable unemployment until these men are absorbed. I wonder what would be the condition if we had 400,000 or 500,000 of our sons journeying back to the Dominion at the present time! The reason we have not more unemployment

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to-day is the unfortunate reason that while the United States was enjoying a wave of prosperity denied to us, our men became absorbed in the republic.

Mr. GARDINER: Was there any unemployment in this country in the winter of 1913 and 1914?

Mr. MEIGHEN: There was some. I never hope to abolish unemployment absolutely, but I do not consider that a reason why we should not try. I do not hope that we can ever become a wholly self-contained country, but I believe in approximating to it with all the might we possess. I do not think we can ever have absolute stability, but that is no reason why we should be continually hacking at our tariff and placing our industries in peril.

As respects agriculture in Canada to-day, it suffers just as agriculture suffers the world over. Does any hon. member really believe that, with agriculture the world over producing grain crops by the hundreds of millions of bushels above the average production, and with the largest consuming continent twenty per cent below its average consumption, we can produce at once a healthy, wholesome agricultural condition by any fiscal system in the world? These conditions are world-wide. They obtain it is true in the United States in respect of the grain area. They obtain the world over, and they are suffering in some other countries even worse than we are here. But in Canada surely something can be done. In Canada our policy should be to endeavour to get, not only for manufacturers but for farmers, a preference within those markets which are the best for the whole Dominion. I have been in favour of a British preference all my life, but I want a British preference for which something is obtained. This was the purpose of the British preference as originally instituted. I can see no reason for a British preference or any other preference unless it is of benefit to the country which gives the preference. I believe in Canada standing up for her own interests in trade matters, and adopting a policy which will improve the business of this Dominion. I know of no other way to hold our own. We have hope, and there is reason to have hope, that we can accomplish something in this direction. If we make concerted effort throughout the whole Empire we can, I should think, get results. But if our representatives at the Imperial Conferences where these matters should be pressed, adopt an attitude of indifference and merely