

of having that question settled definitely and rightly at the present time; but I want to give notice to the government that members who sit in this part of the House at least have not yet given up the idea of tariff reduction, and do intend pressing for further reduction along this line. I am greatly encouraged in this after listening to the speech of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) last night. I thought perhaps that, having made some little movement last year he felt now that he might rest upon his oars and leave things alone for some time. But he was careful to explain to the House last night that the manufacturers were never so prosperous as they are to-day, especially those who had been affected by the reduction in the tariff. This being so, I expect he will come forward with renewed courage and touch other fields that have as yet been left untouched.

I wish to say a few words with regard to transportation. What the arteries are to the human body, transportation is to the industrial and economic life of a country. The transportation system is really the very centre of our national life. The whole question of railway rates to-day is now before the country, and we want to have it definitely and rightly settled. I mentioned the Maritime provinces some little time ago. I notice they are also in earnest in this matter. I have learned to know just a little during the last three years about the great provinces of Ontario and Quebec. No one can admire those provinces more than I do, and no matter what the future may hold, I expect that they will grow and become prosperous. But I desire to make a prophecy. I predict that in the not distant future, under proper conditions, the great majority of Canadian people will live in the territory west of the Great Lakes. I make that statement at this time to the people of eastern Canada, just to remind them that when the balance swings the other way, we will be just as ready to do justice to them as they are willing to do justice to us at the present time.

Mr. STEVENS: Is that a threat?

Mr. FORKE: No threat is intended. I desire to say a few words about the province of the hon. member for Vancouver Centre (Mr. Stevens). The future of British Columbia is all right—no question about it. I believe the great arteries of trade in the future will be on the Pacific ocean, and nothing in this world can prevent the province of British Columbia growing in numbers and prosperity.

An hon. MEMBER: Chinamen.

[Mr. Forke.]

Mr. FORKE: No. But at the present time transportation to the prairies is a question of tremendous importance. Situated as they are in the centre of the continent from east to west, and denied, Mr. Speaker, an outlet to the north at the present time, it follows that any system of railway freight rates is a great problem to the people living in those provinces.

Another point is that any railway situation which rests upon high rates is not resting upon an economically sound foundation; increased population, increased production and increased traffic would be a very much safer basis for our railways than extremely high rates imposed upon a small population. There has been a great deal of misunderstanding in the west with regard to freight rates, and I believe for that reason more attention should be paid to this matter than has been given it in the past. The Premier of Manitoba made a statement the other day, and with permission of the House I should like to read what he said. This was a communication to the *Montreal Herald* of January 10. He said:

Railway lines have been built and equipped and goods are transported into and out of the country, but shippers are asked to pay a freight charge which is excessive. There is also imposed upon the people of the province—

Speaking of Manitoba.

—a tariff on imported goods which renders their position most difficult. The people are convinced that this arbitrary economic arrangement is unjust and unfair, and it may be taken for granted that the fight will never cease, until there has been a more satisfactory arrangement.

The fifth paragraph of the Speech from the Throne deals with ocean freight rates. The government has been twitted a good deal about the legislation that was passed in regard to lake freights, and perhaps the whole thing did not turn out as satisfactory as might have been the case. I have never felt inclined to blame the government for any mistake or miscarriage that has occurred respecting legislation passed in this regard. Everyone is aware to-day that lake freights are in a very unsatisfactory condition; that one-half of our grain is at present being carried to American ports; that it can be carried from Fort William to American ports at a cheaper rate than it can be transported a shorter distance to Canadian ports. As long as this condition of affairs exists, do hon. gentlemen believe that the situation on the lakes is what it ought to be? When we come to deal with ocean freights we are, perhaps, grappling with a wider question, but we can let this matter stand until we hear what proposals the government has to make in regard to it. I would