

faulty action of the Finance Department. Why is not the lowering of the British exchange to a greater degree due to faulty action of the free trade Government of England? Now, let me say this for my hon. friend's comfort—

Mr. MICHAEL CLARK: Is that a question?

Sir THOMAS WHITE: No, it is a rhetorical question? Let me say this for his comfort; free trade has nothing whatever to do with it, one way or the other. It is the war that has brought about a lowering in the value of the British pound sterling, just as it has brought about a fall in the Canadian exchange. If we had free trade here to-day it could not improve our exchange situation; it could only aggregate it. Would our exchange be any better than it is to-day if there were no tariff in this country; if goods were coming in from the United States under a free trade policy?

An hon. MEMBER: No.

An hon. MEMBER: Worse.

Sir THOMAS WHITE: Worse,—I should say it would be worse. Economic laws show clearly that it would be worse, because on top of our tariff with United States you have another tariff of 17 per cent by the reason of the fall in our exchange. This discussion of the respective merits of tax-free and taxable bonds is not new. In fact, there is hardly anything new in the world. If my hon. friend will look up the Democratic platform laid down in the Civil War he will find a plank against tax free bonds. The Republicans adopted tax-free bonds, because they carried on the war; they were the people who had to face the financial situation and get the money. The Democrats could criticise; they did not have to act; and they put a plank in their platform after the war condemning the Republican party. History simply repeats itself. Why, Mr. Speaker, when war breaks out and nobody knows whether it will last one year, or two years, five years or ten years, or whether the country is going to come through bankrupt, or what the taxation is going to be, is it not advisable that there should be some certainty in the amount which a man may rely upon getting for his money, at a time when he can otherwise obtain the highest possible rates for it? The Republicans were confronted with that condition in the Civil War, and we were confronted with it here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to offer the Government any advice. I have worked

[Sir Thomas White.]

with them; I know their zeal; I know their ability. I have entire confidence in them to meet any problem that is likely to arise during the further term of this Parliament. I believe it is the settled opinion of this country that the Government should carry on.

The Prime Minister is ill. I have been pleased with the remarks of hon. gentlemen opposite with regard to the Prime Minister; there is always a chivalry in this House for men under disability. Nobody knows the extent of the work carried on and the burden of the responsibility borne by Sir Robert Borden during the war and in the period since the war. Nobody knows the weight carried by the ministers. After all, men are only flesh and blood, not steel and iron. Sir Robert Borden is not the first Prime Minister of Canada who has been ill. Sir John A. Macdonald was seriously ill on various occasions. Sir Wilfrid Laurier was seriously ill in 1900. He told me about it once; so serious was his illness that it was looked upon as remarkable that he recovered. Prime Ministers are like other men, subject to human infirmity. The Prime Minister should have all the time he desires in which to recover his health. The Government is in good hands; at its head is one of the ablest parliamentarians in this House, if not the ablest. Carry on—that is what the people of Canada desire this Government to do—carry on, always dealing with questions from the standpoint of the national interest as opposed to the sectional interest. Unless I am much mistaken, the public will make short work at the next election of extremists of this kind. I have every confidence in the ability of the Government to deal with the weighty problems that may come before it,—the problem of promoting immigration; the problem of maintaining our trade and industry; the problem of dealing with soldiers' pensions and the Civil Re-establishment and rehabilitation of the soldier; the railway problem.

An election at this time? The leader of the Opposition surely would not want an election unless he had some hope of coming back as Leader of the House and of the Government. We have taken over one of the greatest railway systems in the world, if not the greatest. The Government and those on this side of the House have committed themselves to the largest project of public ownership that has ever been attempted. What is the problem? The problem is to organize and administer that system and its finances through competent men, who will not be influenced by nor ex-