

The Address—Mr. Fielding

Mr. MORRISON: Building the Hudson Bay railway is not really an expenditure; it is an investment. We contend that it will pay for itself.

Mr. FIELDING: Yes, it is an investment, my hon. friend says. My hon. friend reminds me of a chap in our boyhood days who had a pitch and toss arrangement. He would cry: "Come up, boys, it is not your money we want, it's your patronage."

Mr. MORRISON: All we have been getting so far from the government is promises, instead of patronage.

Mr. FIELDING: My hon. friend is hard to please. We have given him large and numerous reductions in answer to his demands for them.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: And notwithstanding his vote against them.

Mr. FIELDING: He did not mean to vote against them in detail. He only voted against them in their totality, which he thought was a different thing. I am not saying that everything has been done that everybody has asked. Few of us get all we want in this wicked world, but I think it would be well for us that we should express appreciation of what we do get. We may well be thankful even for small mercies, coupled with the expectation of better things to come.

Let us not be afraid of the debt. My hon. friend from South Cape Breton treated that this afternoon in a very serious way. Canada is a country requiring a great deal of development; we are not a new country, but we are still a partially developed country, and if we are to meet the demands arising in all parts of the country, I do not hesitate to say that you cannot reduce the public debt at the present time. I take the responsibility of saying that. The late government—and I am not throwing any rocks at them—had to increase the public debt by \$92,000,000 one year, the next year by \$81,000,000, apart from war matters, and we confess that we shall have to increase the debt this year largely, though not to quite as large an amount. It is folly to pretend, in these pressing times of development and great needs, that you can carry on the business of the country without any increase of the public debt. Such a thing is an ideal to have in mind; we are all the better to have such ideals and to strive for them, even if we cannot reach them, and it is the duty of any Minister of Finance to make an earnest effort to see that the national debt is not increased more than is necessary. The figures which I have given you will, I think,

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show that we are acting on that principle. If we had to be afraid of somebody coming every year and saying: "Oh, you are increasing the public debt," then we would be at a standstill. This is a new country. This is a live, go-ahead country. New problems are arising.

New occasions teach new duties;
Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still, and onward,
Who would keep abreast of truth.

There are things to be done in Canada, and I hope and trust the government will have courage to do them, in the belief that wise expenditure is true economy.

There is a more serious side to these amendments. I was amazed to find my hon. friend from Calgary West (Mr. Shaw) say that this is not a vote of want of confidence. It is an extraordinary idea for my hon. friend to entertain. I want to tell him and all others that, as I said before, while there are many questions upon which a government may properly invite and welcome suggestions, when you come to a matter of passing this simple, respectful Address to His Excellency the Governor General, there can be no compromise, and I say again that no self-respecting government will stand and accept an amendment anything like that. When all these things are considered, I hope that the hon. gentlemen who moved these resolutions under the impression that they do not involve want of confidence will accept my statement when I say frankly and sincerely that they do involve a vote of non-confidence, with all the consequences that may arise therefrom.

This much is clear, Mr. Speaker. If this government does not possess the confidence of this House and of the country, there is no other group in this House that can. That much will be admitted. So if either of these motions should pass, it would impose consequences upon this government of the gravest character. Are we to have political chaos in this country? Are we to have political conditions such as may be found in some of the turbulent states of Europe where governments rise and fall, and come and go, and their supporters fight each other on the floors of their legislative chambers, and do such other things as bring parliamentary institutions into contempt? No. This is:—

A land of settled government,
A land of just and old renown,
Where Freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent.

And precedent tells us that we cannot accept these amendments. If my hon. friends on further reflection think it is their duty to move