

our own country declining very considerably, and the purchasing power of our people also decreasing. We observed the purchasing power of most nations of the world also falling, and that meant a diminution in our exports to those countries which in the past were purchasers of Canadian products. We found high rates of exchange, insurance and freight, a cessation partially of the shipping business of the world, a tendency towards the protection of gold reserves on the part of nearly every country in the world, a cessation of borrowings by Canada, and all these tended to a derangement of the financial and trade conditions of this country. It was inevitable, therefore, that there should come a diminution in our trade and revenue, and it was not unexpected that efforts should be made by the Government of Canada to secure further revenues for anticipated declines. It is needless for me to make any reference to or to discuss the necessity of securing additional revenues for the treasury of this country. Whether this might have been avoided in the past by a different disposition of Government policy is not a matter for debate upon this occasion. The condition confronts us and must be met, and I think it will be the judgment of this House that it was imperative that some ways and means should be provided to meet to some extent at least the diminution in revenue.

I do not propose to discuss the tariff amendments which have been proposed by the Minister of Finance this afternoon. To some degree, at least, I am sure the changes he has proposed will meet with the commendation of the people of this country. However, the changes proposed are very considerable and substantial, and I am sure hon. members opposite will admit that it is but a fair request that we be allowed to reserve our comments on the tariff resolutions until they are placed before the Committee of the House.

I have just a word or two to say in regard to one or two other matters. The Minister of Finance announced the intention of the Government to abstain from further unnecessary public expenditures, but he gave no indication of the extent to which work on public works, the money for which has already been voted, will be carried on. I admit there is room for difference of opinion as to the extent to which the government should proceed in respect to public expenditures. It must be conceded, I think, that public undertakings of a national character already commenced or

in contemplation, and which may reasonably be expected to be productive to the nation should, if possible, be continued. I do submit, however, and predicate that in the future in this country both in respect to public and private expenditures there must come a decided change of policy. I think I may in fairness say that a large proportion of the public expenditures made in this country in the past—and I am not referring to the expenditures made by one government or another—was very doubtful indeed, and I believe the public will demand that in the future a vast amount of public expenditures of the character made in the past must necessarily be abandoned or abated. If one were carefully to examine the Estimates passed at the last session of that Parliament he might readily conclude that they contained supply for public expenditures, aggregating many millions of dollars, which should never have been suggested at all, and which now should be suspended at least and probably never recommenced in the future, but be entirely abandoned. I trust that the Government will exercise a wise discretion in public expenditures during the next few years, and especially during the present fiscal year, and that none will be commenced which are not of a national character and which will not be productive to the nation.

There is another matter to which I wish to refer very briefly indeed, and it is one which affects the welfare of the country. I am assuming to speak largely for myself and not on behalf of any other hon. gentleman in this House. In this matter I am not attempting to dictate what should be the permanent fiscal policy of the Government; it is rather in the way of a suggestion of temporary relief to the people. I refer to the food supplies of this country. It is quite apparent that European energies for many months to come—I trust not many—will be devoted to war and not to the production of the necessities of life. The sword and not the ploughshare is in action in Europe today. Fighting is taking place probably at this very moment in the very garden of Europe and in the greatest wheatfields of the world. This necessarily means a very pronounced curtailment in the production of the food supplies of the world and a drain upon the food supplies of this country, the United States, and some others of the few non-belligerent countries. I am not speaking after any investigation or study of the estimated crop productions of this country during the present year. Distressing