

lowed our old practice—and my hon. friend from Hastings will remember what it was forty years ago—if there is anything wrong in financial circles, and if there is any depression, we blame the Government for it.

Hon. Mr. LOUGHEED—Hear, hear.

Hon. Sir GEORGE ROSS—I remember distinctly how loudly our political opponents blamed us about 1875-76-77 and 1878 for the depression which then existed. They sought a cure. Perhaps the cause was, to a certain extent, remediable, but I do not believe that governments can remedy every grievance. And yet, I am bound to say that where it lies within the range of a government to remove a grievance, they are bound to act. Now, what is the cause of the present depression? I do not know precisely. I do not know anybody who does know. I think it would require a man of the genius of Adam Smith to explain fully the situation. I am not going to blame the Government for the depression but, in looking around, if its members can find anything which would clarify the situation, and lift the cloud which is on the sky, then they should immediately apply themselves to enact such remedy. We complain of the high cost of living. What is the cause? It is a combination of a great many causes, and it will be the first duty of the Government—for it is universally admitted that the cost of living is high—to examine into those causes. Would it help the situation to remove the duty from foodstuffs? If on inquiry it would be found to be helpful for that purpose, then the Government should act. The Government of the United States revised its tariff last year for that purpose. In 1846 Sir Robert Peel removed the duty on corn in order to relieve the distressed condition abroad in Ireland, and which, in some respects, extended to England also. If it be found that there are trusts and combinations which stand between the producer and consumer, and exact an undue toll upon the produce that passes from the one to the other, the Government should exercise the power which it has under the statutes, and see that such trusts and combinations, if they do exist, should be at once abolished. In the same way, if transportation freights are too high, and the Government is empowered to regulate them through the Railway Commission, they should be immediately inquired into, and

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a just balance struck between the transportation companies' charges, and the producers, whose goods are by them carried into the markets of the world. I am not prescribing any specific; I could not do it, perhaps, with my knowledge of economics, even if I were to attempt it. I am simply indicating this; that there is a cause or combination of causes for the high cost of living, and the Government is responsible, so far as it lies within its power, to bring about a proper equilibrium between the producer and consumer, and see that the wrong, if wrong there be, is immediately redressed. I was glad to notice my hon. friend refer in the rosy terms which he did to the growth of our commerce and trade, and to the steady increase of exports and imports. It is very pleasing to know that for 20 years or more there has been a steady growth in the trade of Canada. That growth should be maintained, or at least promoted, by every means within the power of the Government of Canada. Trade will follow the flag; trade will follow sound commercial principles; trade will follow the enterprise of those engaged in it. All these are conditions which the Government controls more or less; and we hope that although under the late Government there was unbounded prosperity—such prosperity as Canada had never enjoyed—the advent to power of the present occupants of the treasury benches will not impair that prosperity. We hope too the present Government will not neglect the various opportunities at its disposal for increasing it, for the success of Canada depends upon the wise administration of commercial affairs. I may express the hope that my hon. friend from Toronto, who has made himself known to us from his place on the floor, will long continue to hold the moderate views which he now entertains, and give to us the benefit of his ripe experience in financial matters.

We heard from the hon. member from St. John (Hon. Mr. Thorne), whom we gladly welcome here, a very interesting story of two trips he took across the continent, the first one in 1901. It was a revelation to him, as it has been to every one of us who has crossed the Canadian part of this continent. He saw things that he had never dreamed of, so have we all. Little villages had grown into towns and become the nuclei of large cities, he saw the beginnings of large enterprises, and he came home pleased and