

judge for himself: suffice it to say that no other fate could have been expected for such a contract negotiated as it was by an individual discredited in this country and incompetent to deal with such business matters. The country was enraged to learn that the government had entrusted a matter of the importance and magnitude of the so-called Petersen contract with an agent wholly unfitted for such work.

I might, Mr. Speaker, refer to the speech of the hon. member for Rosetown (Mr. Evans) which was an undoubted plea for free trade in this country. The hon. gentleman complains that because of the high rate of wages the farmers of the country are not able to hire help but have to plod along without it. I gather that the hon. gentleman would welcome a revival of the times of old when labourers earned four dollars a week and lived on oatmeal. He would, I believe, go even to the customs of Holland and Belgium where the labouring classes are poorly fed, poorly clad, and protect their feet by wooden shoes. We do not want a class of labourers of that kind in this country. We want men well paid, earning a wage that will permit them to live as human beings, enjoying the comforts of modern times, educating their families, and, with the exercise of economy and prudence, laying by something for a rainy day. These, I say, are the conditions to be desired. But if free trade were adopted in a short time, no labourers would be obtainable in our country; all would have gone south of the line into the most highly protected country in the world.

Under the present government, conditions have become almost intolerable in many districts of this country, if not over the whole of it, during the past three or four years. Tinkering with the tariff has closed many and many a factory and has driven from our fair Canada not only individuals but whole families, to a foreign country where they obtain a good living. Only a few months ago a steamer landed in Halifax 2,000 tons of German fertilizer within sight of a silent factory that once was a flourishing industry employing Nova Scotia labour but is now idle because of the policy of the government.

My friend behind me, the hon. member for West Hamilton (Mr. Bell), referred the other night to the destitution in his own district. I can add to what he said that in Nova Scotia we are suffering because of the closing of factories, which not only decreases the demand for coal but throws men with families out of employment and makes them beggars almost on the streets. My own experience

has been that the unemployment, not only in Cape Breton but throughout the whole of Nova Scotia, is serious indeed. From the city of Halifax and all over the county of Halifax I almost daily receive applications for work from men who are capable, honest, steady, men who want work and cannot obtain it. As one instance I mention that of a family visited by a member of my family shortly before my leaving home, where the head of the house, an honest, sober, industrious man, could not get work. The home was tidy and clean, but the wife and three children were scrimply attired; two of the children were in bare feet; the family was almost starving for want of work. On New Year's Day that mother did not taste a mouthful of food. In another case, a carpenter who was a good, steady workman had been out of employment for months. This man I have known from childhood. In his early days when he had steady employment he was frugal enough to buy himself a home which he has had to mortgage and probably will lose because he has no money to live on or to pay his taxes. I only mention these two cases; there are hundreds of them in my constituency, and the deplorable part of it is, judging by the four past years of this government's rule, that should the hon. gentlemen who are endeavouring to retain the reins of power succeed, there apparently will be no improvement in these conditions.

In Halifax, real estate is practically un-saleable; property owners, scores of them, have not the wherewithal to pay their taxes, and the financial conditions in that city are such as may lead to serious consequences. Yet we hear from the benches opposite that Canada is prosperous. It is work our people want, not charity. I admit there is some prosperity at the present time, but why? It is not because of any act of this government but simply because Providence has been good to us, and the crops have brought hundreds of millions of dollars into the country. Does the government claim any credit for this condition of things?

The would-be Prime Minister of this country is at the present time endeavouring to obtain a seat in this House. It is with some degree of astonishment that I find that gentleman in the position which he has occupied during the past four years. From his record I have very grave doubts whether he is a true Canadian. The fact may be recalled that when it was his duty to defend our flag he was in a foreign country. Comment on this I will not make.