

I was interested in the reference made by the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario to what he called the middle class. This he defined as made up of those whose incomes were between \$3,000 and \$7,500 a year. May I tell him, although he does not need to be told, that in terms of money—and those are the terms which he understands—that is not the middle class of this nation. As a matter of fact, the number of people who receive incomes of the mean of those two figures—that would be \$5,250—or, say between \$5,000 and \$6,000 according to the Canada Year Book, in 1942 was 8,390. In 1943 there were 9,691; and these are the numbers the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario characterized as the middle class people of this country the population of which is in the neighbourhood of eleven million. I was interested in this reference by the hon. member to classes, interested, too, in his plea for better interest rates so that those who do not work could have a better standard of living from their investments. The word “class” coming from the hon. member has some significance, since he is a leader in the Tory party, particularly when it is coupled with the little slip he made in the house when he characterized the electors as stupid. I know that was just a slip of the tongue, and perhaps he should not be held to account for it, but taken together with the other matter it has perhaps some significance. When the hon. member was a boy this word “class” was in very common use and had a very different meaning. The class to which one belonged in those days was not altogether a matter of the possession of money. In those days they spoke of such things as birth and breeding and culture, but now my hon. friend falls into the error of which he accused the Minister of Finance in making his rebuttal speech the other day, when he said in reference to the minister, “He talks of nothing but money, money, money.” I might say to some of my hon. friends of the Tory party that this is the third session I have been in this house, and since I have been here some of them have discussed little but money, money, money.

So my hon. friend designates the middle class as those who are in possession of incomes of between \$3,000 and \$7,500 a year, I presume irrespective of how they get it. In his speech the hon. member referred to this middle class—and I want to make it perfectly clear that the term is his—as the backbone of the country. I was reminded of a conversation I had with an old Englishman once as we stood resting our oxen at the end of a furrow. He had been a gardener on some old country estate, and in conversation with me one day about conditions in England he used an

[Mr. Knight.]

expression very like that of the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario, when he said, “The aristocracy, God bless them; they are the backbone of the country. Why, at Christmas time the master ’ad us all up to the big ’all and gave us a bottle of whiskey and a bag of oranges for the children.” My friend did not explain how it came about that his master was the purveyor of all the oranges and all the whiskey; his thinking, of course, did not go that far. In those days, however, the masters retained enough of the old feudalism about them to acknowledge their responsibility to others. If they believed that they ruled by divine right, as some of them did in all good faith, at least they felt some responsibility to the people whose work made that rule possible. In many cases they were men of some culture and some feeling. Rightly or wrongly they despised the nouveau riche of the new industrialism, who in modern society had no particular regard for their workers but, when those workers became old or crippled, threw them into the lap of a paternalistic municipal or other governmental authority. The Tory party, which my hon. friend so ably represents, has of course now transferred its allegiance to this commercial and industrial class, and speaks at all times in favour of its privileged position.

Mr. GREEN: Of course that is a lot of rubbish you are talking now.

Mr. KNIGHT: As my hon. friend spoke I could not help thinking that perhaps those of us who were present at the time the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario was giving his rebuttal were witnessing an historic event. I asked myself, is this the swan song of the Tory party? It sounded like a swan song. Toryism is almost dead throughout the world. It is true that in one other place in the British empire, that is in my native Ulster, they have a Conservative government; but there are several reasons for its survival there. By long tradition it has been associated with what they call the Unionist cause, but I want to tell the house that some of its legislation has been most progressive, in fact so progressive that if anyone else were to bring it about they themselves would characterize it, as would hon. gentlemen to my right, as socialistic. This Conservative government in the north of Ireland is being wise in the economic sense. It is travelling ahead with the times. I must remind my reactionary friends in this house who belong to the same party that the Ulster government has a board which completely controls all road transport in that country, both freight and passenger. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner), who is not in his seat at the moment, I think will