

would be to the interest of the country to make a change in the Government, I think it is our duty to defend the position we occupy and to endeavor to lay facts and figures fairly before the people, to show them that they are receiving great benefit by the legislation introduced by the present Government. I can only say that if the facts and figures before us to-day, and the observations we can make from time to time, are any evidence of what the people want and intend to continue, they prove to my mind conclusively that the people believe that they are much better off than they were in 1878, that the present Government are legislating in the interest of the people of the country, and that it is the desire and intention of the people to continue in power the same class of men who have accomplished these great results in the past. I can only say, in reference to the Opposition in this House that if they continue the same line of argument and attack which they have taken during the last five years, I predict that they will remain a long time in the cold shades of Opposition, and that their hair will have grown very grey before they will be called on to enjoy the pleasure of holding office in the Government of this country.

Mr. BECHARD. I do not lose sight of the fact that the House is getting tired of this protracted debate, and is desirous of seeing it brought to an end, but I assure hon. members that I do not intend to solicit their attention for any considerable length of time. I will endeavor to make my remarks in the English language, though I speak it with great difficulty, but I will do so out of a sense of courtesy to the vast majority of this House. Before the National Policy was instituted our ears rang with the flattering promises of its advocates and promoters, and since it has been inaugurated we have heard the same gentlemen at every Session speaking in boastful language of its success. According to them, all the prosperity that this country has been enjoying for the few years past has been due to the influence of that policy. My hon. friend, the member for Ottawa (Mr. Tassé), whom I do not see in its place, in the eloquent speech which he pronounced on Friday last, spoke in glowing terms of the National Policy; and as an evidence of how it is appreciated by the people, said that after being adopted in 1878, it has since been re-affirmed in 1882. It is true that the people, after having adopted the National Policy, re-affirmed it, but my hon. friend should not forget that the people sometimes change their minds respecting questions of public policy, and surely he has not remained blind to what has taken place in England, for instance, during the last twenty years, where both political parties, Liberals and Conservatives, have held power alternately and for comparatively short terms. Did we not see, last fall, in the neighboring Republic, the Republican party defeated, after having held power for a period of twenty-four years. That which has occurred in other countries has already occurred and will occur in Canada, and it is my sincere belief that the day is not very far distant when the Canadian people will modify their opinion respecting the National Policy. Some hon. gentlemen, in the course of this debate, with a view of showing the prosperous condition of the country, pointed to the increase in our exports of some classes of products, such as fish, lumber and farm produce. No doubt the exports of a nation can be considered as an element of prosperity; the more we export, the more we have produced; but the question here is, whether those exports are the results of the National Policy. If our fishermen had an abundant catch, if our lumbermen exported largely the products of our forests, if our farmers were blest with abundant crops, which they sold at fair prices in foreign markets, I would like to know what the National Policy had to do with this. Surely no man believes that we can regulate here, by legislation, the prices which we may receive in foreign markets for our exports; surely no

man in the full possession of his senses will believe such a position to be a sound one. But, Sir, those hon. gentlemen who spoke in such laudable terms of the increase in our exports had not much to say about the increase in our imports. It is not to be forgotten, however, that not very long ago the excess of our imports over our exports was regarded by hon. gentlemen opposite as a public misfortune and evil. At least, it was so regarded when my hon. friend from East York (Mr. Mackenzie) was at the head of affairs. Those hon. gentlemen pretended that the balance of trade was constantly against us; that as the difference had to be paid in gold, our gold was drawn off from the country, and that the system was ruinous, because it placed us in the condition of a man who consumed more than he produced; but the National Policy, they said, was going to cure that evil. Has it cured it? The official returns tell us that since the National Policy has been instituted, with the exception of one year, our imports have continued to exceed our exports; and mind you, that excess has been in an ascending proportion within the last two or three years. Being in this position, if the theory of the balance of trade, such as interpreted by hon. gentlemen opposite, be correct, this country instead of being prosperous ought to be on its way to ruin; but if, on the contrary, this country is prosperous, the consequence is that the theory of hon. gentlemen opposite is erroneous and unsound. Is not this one of those public questions about which men sometimes change their opinion? And if the hon. gentlemen opposite have modified their opinion on this question, why should we not, on this side, be entitled to believe that the people of Canada will also change their mind in respect to the National Policy? The hon. member for Ottawa (Mr. Tassé), during a portion of his speech, referred to the good results of the National Policy, with respect to the interests of our manufacturers, and as an evidence of those good results, he pointed to the fact that some classes of goods which he mentioned are cheaper to-day than they were before. On this last point I do not differ with my hon. friend. There are goods indeed which are very cheap to-day, and that cheapness is the result of the National Policy; but the question is, whether that cheapness is in accordance with the interest of the manufacturer. The National Policy was established, in so far as the manufacturer was concerned, to promote his interest by protecting him against foreign competition. I have no doubt that our manufacturers received a certain amount of protection from this tariff during the first few years that it was in operation, but we are now beginning to see the other side of the question. Capitalists have invested too much capital in some branches of industry, and the result has been an over-production. Hence the suspension of operations in a large number of our manufactories, and the fact that a certain number of men are to-day without work; and there is the danger that threatens too rapid a development of manufacturing industries stimulated by artificial means. My hon. friend has also alluded to the good results of the policy with regard to the interest of agriculture. Our agriculture, no doubt, has been very prosperous for the past few years, although it is not so prosperous to-day as it has been; but I deny that this prosperity is due to the influence of the National Policy. We had the National Policy in March, 1879, and it is remembered by all that during that whole year the depression continued with more intensity than ever. Never before had more banks failed, more bankruptcies occurred; never had farm produce been sold cheaper in any one year than it was during the year 1879, and the first part of 1880. But, in the second part of 1880, a revival of business having taken place in some other countries with which we have extensive commercial relations, that revival of business was also felt here. In the succeeding year we were blessed with abundant crops, whilst crops failed in some