

they have instructed us to do. And while it is quite true that hon. gentlemen opposite are in possession of the Treasury benches, I allege that they have no warrant from the people to interfere in the fiscal policy which has been in force the last twenty years and has produced a great amount of prosperity and content. What is the National Policy? There was a time in the annals of Canadian politics when lines were fairly and squarely drawn, when either upon the public platform or on the floor of this House or in the public press, each party could be told by its colours—the one unswerving in its devotion to the policy of protection, while the other, while giving unyielding opposition to that tariff—alas, for the frailty of human hopes!—never was able to adhere to any fixed line of principle or policy. There have been since the inception of the National Policy a number of general elections. I ask any hon. gentleman if he can show where the Liberal party in this country has ever, during the past eighteen years, adhered to the one and the same policy. In the last campaign, their appeal was made, not on the platform of the National Policy with a preference for continental trade, but was made on the plea that they were in favour of a tariff for revenue alone. In the preceding elections, their appeal was made on the ground that the interests of Canada were tied up altogether with those of the great republic to the south, and that the only hope for the future prosperity of Canada lay in a treaty of commercial union with the United States. Are they to-day the advocates of commercial union? Not at all, and the hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat is forced to admit that they have appropriated to their own use the fiscal policy which has been in force during the past eighteen years, with a few changes and conditions.

But what have these hon. gentlemen attempted to do? The hon. the Finance Minister, the other night, said that his party was at the great disadvantage in being asked to raise a superstructure on a poor foundation. Well, all I can say is this, that hon. gentlemen opposite were certainly at their wits' end when they devoted their attention and energies to framing a protective tariff policy in this country, and the reason was that year in and year out, for the past fifteen years, they have been the advocates of free trade and commercial union and reciprocity with the United States, and therefore is it to be wondered at that the measure they present to-day bears unmistakably marks of botched mechanism.

What has the National Policy done for this country in the past eighteen years? No better proof could be given of the advantage of this policy than the fact that hon. gentlemen opposite are compelled to accept it almost in its ent. ety. It has

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given to the people vast manufacturing interests and given work to Canadian labourers and workingmen, and enabled them to earn higher wages than the same classes are earning in the countries of Europe. What are the wages paid to men in this country as compared with those paid in Europe? The wages paid in Belgium are admitted to be the cheapest. In Germany the wages are about one-half what they are in this country. In England they are five-eighths, and in France the wages are about a medium between those in England and Germany. What this country needs at present is not any tinkering with the tariff, but rest, in order that our people may have restored those energies which have been severely tried in the past five years. But where are the hon. gentlemen to-day? They are, as I have said, admirers of the National Policy—the policy which they have for years denounced in the strongest language possible. They remind one of the lines:

Vice is a monster of such frightful mien
That to be hated needs but to be seen.
But seen too oft, familiar with its face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

For a number of years these hon. gentlemen endured the National Policy. After that they began to pity it, and to-day, the National Policy, by reason of the firmness of their embrace, stands in a fair way of almost being strangled. And of all those who are embracing it, whether it be the Knight of the Rueful Countenance (Sir Richard Cartwright) down to the last admirer of that policy on that side, each one is vieing with the other to prove to the people that the National Policy as tinkered by them is the tariff policy which should prevail in this country for years to come.

Looking back eighteen years, the question is, not whether the National Policy has come up to our expectations, but whether Canada has been a gainer or a loser by that policy, and whether we would have done better under the policy which hon. gentlemen opposite used to advocate in past years. There will come a time, I suppose, when the history of the Liberal party will be written, and it will be found hard to believe that such a party could have departed as it has done from its principles, and they will be looked upon as nothing but the remnants of a once great political party.

Now, the hon. gentleman (Mr. Macdonald, Huron), who has just resumed his seat dealt with some matters to which I wish more particularly to refer. One was the coal oil industry. If there was one plank in the platform of hon. gentlemen opposite in which they affected to have an especial concern, it was in the tariff relative to coal oil. And yet to-day, after all their professions what changes have been made in the tariff? There has been a paltry reduction