

was that Canada was prosperous. To-day we have a different tone. To-day there is no song of exultation or of triumph. To-day there is the plaintive admission that Canada is suffering, though in a minor degree, from a universal depression. Depression, says my hon. friend from East Simcoe; but then, where is the virtue of the National Policy? What has become of the power of the National Policy? Was it not to remove the then existing depression and to for ever prevent its recurrence, that the people of Canada were induced to submit to that intolerable yoke of taxation which by a strange euphemism is termed the National Policy? What is the commercial situation, the economical situation, the financial situation of this country to-day? Sir, we have a deficit, the ugliest that ever made its appearance in Canada, an immense public debt ever increasing, an alarming falling off in the revenue, public burdens always increasing, a paralyzing commercial crisis and stringency, ever wider spreading, amongst all classes of the community. This is the situation which my friend characterized by the diluted term depression. Sir, it is high time that the Ministers and the friends of the Ministers should no longer delude themselves with the mere clatter of words, but should open their eyes to the fact that Canada has reached a most dangerous condition. It would be idle folly for the members of this House, sitting on that side or on this side, to imagine that Canada is simply suffering from one of those cycles of depression which come periodically. Sir, I am sorry to say, but it is a fact to which the attention of the Government must be called, since they persist in ignoring it, that the evils from which Canada suffers to-day are of a more alarming character than those caused by a mere passing depression; and the abiding cause, the source of all those evils, lies in the fact that the country has been burdened with an immense and alarming public debt, and equally alarming public expenditure and at the same time with a high tariff, imposed upon us under suppositions which have never materialized—under promises of development which, if it had taken place, would perhaps have made the burden bearable, but the failure of which makes the burden hardly bearable by our small and scanty population. Why, Sir, I recall to the memory of the House that in the early days of the National Policy, when the public debt was increasing at the rate of a hundred millions at a time, there were men in this country, not confined to this side of the House—men in all walks of life and in all conditions, politicians and non-politicians—who were staggered at the magnitude of the burden imposed on the shoulders of the Canadian people, who believed that it was too great for us to carry. But their apprehensions were removed by the assurance often given by the occupants of the Treasury

Mr. LAURIER.

benches, that immigrants would follow the track of the Canadian Pacific Railway, that the immense territories of the Northwest would fill with a teeming population, and that the price of the lands sold would be more than sufficient to recoup the country for the whole outlay. That statement was made, not once, but many times by Sir Charles Tupper at that time, and repeated by his followers until it became a stock phrase. I remember, as everybody I suppose does, that Sir Charles Tupper fortified this statement with the opinion of a high civil functionary whose duties should enable him to speak with high authority on the question on which he wrote. I remember Sir Charles Tupper quoting the opinion of Mr. Burgess, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, to the effect that in a short time the sale of the public lands would cover the whole outlay. That letter has often been quoted, and it may be well to quote it again if only to show the House that the condition which the country has reached to-day is not the result of a casual depression,—to show the wide chasm which separates us from the high hopes which were held out to us at that time. Here is the letter of Mr. Burgess:

Ottawa, 4th May, 1883.

Sir,—Having given the subject my best and fullest consideration, I estimate that the receipts of this department from the sale of agricultural and coal lands, timber dues, rents of grazing lands, and sales of mineral lands other than coal, with the royalties from the minerals between the 1st January, 1883, and the 31st December, 1891, both inclusive, will amount to not less than \$58,000,000.

A. M. BURGESS.

Sir, everybody who had a seat in Parliament at that time recollects that when that letter was read to the House by Sir Charles Tupper, endorsed as it was by the character, the ability and the reputation of that right hon. gentleman, it was received with wild cheers on the other side of the House. The hon. members on that side of the House affected to believe, and perhaps did believe, that there was a ready asset of \$58,000,000, not yet in the coffers of Canada, but to be found in our coffers within eight years afterwards, and that therefore there was no cause for alarm if the public debt jumped up at the fearful rate at which it was then being increased. I notice that the same letter read again to-day, and read in the light of our experience of the last year, does not evoke any cheer at all on the other side of the House. Why, Sir, it would be almost ludicrous, if the case were not such a sad one, to refer to that letter now, to comment upon the statesmanship—because at that time it was called statesmanship—which could build up such castles in the air. I do not care to do so. I come to sober facts. How many millions, I ask the Minister of Finance, have been realized from the sale of agricultural lands, how