

the shoulders of the rich people who are well able to bear it. At the same time in regard to other measures of relief the Government still asks us to wait until they are in a position to see what can be done.

The Minister of Finance has claimed credit for lowering the tariff upon farming implements; but the reduction of duties in that regard leaves farming implements, practically speaking, in the position they were in before the outbreak of the war. The Government has been pursuing a policy of inaction and it is still advising the country to wait for measures of relief. There is one former member of the Cabinet, however, who because tired of procrastination, and of asking the people to wait, I refer to the ex-Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Crerar) who, the moment the Budget was resolved upon, forwarded his resignation to the Prime Minister. Evidently that hon. gentleman deemed he had been waiting long enough. If the rest of his former colleagues did not hear the protests of the Western farmers ever since the signing of the armistice and the cessation of hostilities, the ex-Minister of Agriculture was keenly alive to their lamentations. He, for one, desired no further artificial barriers between Canada and the United States; he for one wished to see the farming industry, the chief industry of Canada, immediately put upon a proper footing. Had the appeals of the farming industry been heeded, we should have seen a lessening in the high prices which the labourer had to pay for his food in the cities while the western farmers would have enjoyed relief even as early as the first of December last. Those farmers, intelligent men as they are, and anxious not only to ameliorate their own condition but to promote the interests of the rest of the population, more especially in the congested cities of our country, demanded tariff reduction in various directions in order to carry out their aims, and they did not see why they should be called upon to wait. As early as November 27 last, a little over two weeks after the armistice was signed, they met in Winnipeg and urged the adoption of their programme for free trade with the United States in certain lines and for the lowering of the tariff on certain articles which they need, in order that they might immediately make their preparations for the following spring and not be compelled to delay until June arrived, when the preparations for the next year's crop would be completed. They wanted time to prepare themselves and let the country know that during the following summer, if every-

[Mr. Turgeon.]

thing went well, they would have a surplus crop with the result that food products might be lessened in price. They were not animated by a selfish spirit in their demands. They were asking for the removal of duties but at the same time they favoured the free importation of food products from all other countries. They therefore asked the Government to give effect to the reciprocity agreement of 1911, and to enlarge the British preference in order that in the course of five years or so we might have free trade with Great Britain. This was the request of the Western farmers, and I repeat now what I said on an earlier occasion. It will be remembered that in March last, when speaking on the subject, I stated that the farmers of New Brunswick, as I knew them, were in complete accord with the Western farmers on this programme. My words were verified when the Farmers' Union of New Brunswick, at a sitting which was attended by a representative of the Ontario Farmers' Association, passed the same resolution which the latter organization had adopted a month or two previous. So that to-day we have virtually the whole farming industry of Canada urging the Government to put into effect the reciprocity pact. Yet all that the Government has done, after a lapse of eight years, has been to give us free wheat, and also at the urgent request, I have no doubt, of my hon. friend the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Carvell), free potatoes. It has taken the Government eight years of consideration to grant free wheat and free potatoes. How many centuries will the farmers of the West have to wait before the whole of the programme which they are urging is adopted? Really, the Government in the last eight years has shown itself capable only of doing the right thing at the wrong time, and thus the benefits which result when it does move are not so great as if action had been taken at the proper moment. Had the people of Canada been able to enjoy the benefits of the reciprocity agreement in 1911, more particularly during the intervening period until war was declared, we should not have seen an exodus from the West of many good farmers there who originally came from the country to the south but, after the defeat of reciprocity, returned to the United States.

They stopped the current of immigration from the western states to Canada, and as a result we have lost 100,000 of the best farmers, men who would have helped in the production of supplies of foodstuffs for the Allies. This is the condition to which we are reduced to-day, and it is certainly to the