

terest and friendship they have for the farming class. It is always somewhat shocking to hear them express feelings which are grossly in contradiction with the deeds and the past policy of their party. In order to judge of their lack of sincerity we have but to verify the attitude taken by the Conservative party, between 1911 and 1921, towards the farming class of this country. What benefits did the farmers derive during the ten years of their administration? You are aware, Sir, that the paramount question at the general election in 1911, was the reciprocity treaty that Sir Wilfrid Laurier had succeeded in concluding with the United States, and for which the farming class had been clamouring for years. This treaty so highly advantageous to the farming community was rejected. However the Conservatives will not readily forget that the crisis they went through was principally due to the fact that the American market was closed to them. As early as 1912, the farmers bitterly clamoured for new markets for their products. We are aware that the Conservative government of that date did nothing to help them, not only did they do nothing, but they attempted to cripple the development of the dairy industry, by allowing margarine to be imported. I must say, Sir, that the farmers of my riding are very thankful to the King government for having prohibited the imports of this product. A further instance, which establishes well the lack of sincerity of the members of the opposition, is the following: At the time the King government cut down the duty on farming implements; when they wished to help the farmers so as to allow them to purchase at lower prices the articles of first necessity of which they were in need to work their farms, we witnessed the opposition having recourse to every possible means in order to prevent the farming class from benefiting by legislation which was all in its favour, and even more, we saw the hon. leader of the opposition state in this House that should he be returned to power, he would re-establish the high protective tariff. That is, the Conservative party, through the mouthpiece of its leader, undertook to abolish the advantages and favours which the King government was granting to the farming class.

Another very important feature for the farmers, the importance of which the Conservative government of the day did not understand or did not care to understand, was the necessity for the farming class to get new markets, in order to sell its products at profitable prices. The King government immediately dealt with this necessity endeavouring especially to revive the prosperity which the

[Mr. Girouard.]

farmers enjoyed previous to the Tory government of 1911. Moreover, Sir, we have as an instance of the government's desire to help the farming class, we have as an instance, I say, the last treaty they have just concluded. I mean the West Indies treaty which the King government presents to the farming class with the firm belief that this treaty will benefit them, because it guarantees to the farming class an almost absolute monopoly on the products of the farm, such as butter, cheese, potatoes and other products. Behold then, Sir, these same gentlemen who, when they were in power, could have done something to help the farming class, yet they stirred not, and they come, to-day, in this House, shamming a friendship and an interest which their deeds belie.

The budget speech, Sir, was, especially this year, anxiously awaited. There is no question, I think, which interests so much the public as the discussion of the various measures which appear in the budget. We have the satisfaction and joy to note, in reading this speech, that our financial situation has considerably improved. There is one thing which nobody can deny and which I may be allowed to emphasize: it is that the budget speech has had on the Canadian people a great and beneficial effect which has in some way brought sunshine and hope where hon. members of the opposition would, perhaps, like to see but despondency and misery. This budget is a proof that our country, after struggling courageously, has finally emerged from the difficult situation caused by the economic disturbance brought on by the Tories from 1911 to 1921.

From the outset of the Liberal administration, we were made aware of what would be the policy followed. In order to better appreciate the various measures announced in the budget speech, it is well to glance rapidly over the past, for it is necessary that the people of this country should everlastingly remember what was the financial and economic conditions existing when the King administration came into power in 1921.

The Conservatives contend that our debt is enormous. They never miss an occasion of proclaiming that the taxes are heavy; but why, Sir, do they not also proclaim that they are responsible for such a state, and that if we have taxes, these have become necessary because of their administration. Do they expect to make us forget that they needed but ten years to increase our debt to more than two billion dollars. I think that, if the opposition wished to be sincere, they would admit that when they assumed power in 1911,