

[Major Steel.]

The Empire Settlement Act was passed with the express object of trying to increase the trade of the Empire. Some of the reasons for its not having been up to the present so successful as we had all hoped have been met by, for instance, the reduction of the rate of passages. I am sure we are all glad that there has been such an enormous reduction in the cost of passages to Canada, so that now one can go right out to Western Canada for £8 or £9. There has also been a very large reduction in the cost of passages to Australia. While those reductions have been made, and will, we hope, result in a considerable increase in migration, yet there are several recommendations of the Maclean Committee which I hope the Secretary of State will do his best, in conjunction with the Dominion Ministers, when they come to the Imperial Conference, to carry out. I feel that this is such a vital question for the future of this country and the Empire that we ought to do everything possible to oil the springs and make the Act a success. The Maclean Report makes several recommendations. There was one with regard to the standardisation of all the various insurance schemes that we enjoy, not only in this country but in almost every one of our Dominions. The Report says:

"But in these Dominions the period for residence in order to obtain the benefits varies in almost every Dominion, and in every Dominion the applicant for the benefit has had to reside in that particular Dominion for a certain number of years."

The Maclean Committee recommended that the period of residence necessary to qualify under non-contributory schemes of old age pensions should be uniform throughout the Empire, and that, for the purpose of calculating the qualifying period, residence in any part of the Empire, where a corresponding scheme is in existence should be taken into account. I think that that is an extremely important factor, and I hope the Secretary of State will do his best to try and get that suggestion adopted.

The Committee have also made other suggestions, one of which is that the medical fee charged to an applicant who wishes to obtain an assisted passage to one of our Dominions—it is not a very large sum, I think 10s. 6d.—should be paid for him; and I hope the Secretary

of State will consider that suggestion also. But what I feel to be by far the most important factor is the question of publicity. I do not think we can do too much, and it would be hard to spend too much money, in advertising the Empire and doing all we can to bring home to people in this country the advantages of trading with our Empire. There is not the slightest doubt that Wembley had an enormous effect, and that large masses of the population who went to Wembley realised for the first time what the Empire can do and what it is capable of producing. As is stated in the summary of conclusions in the Fruit Report of the Imperial Economic Committee, what we want to do is to mobilise the consumer in this country, and bring home to him the enormous advantages of doing business with the Empire, as compared with doing business with a foreign country. I do not think we can bring home too much the enormous advantages of trading with Australia or Canada, and the enormous purchases that these men when they go out there will make from us. That will help the trade of this country, and thereby do good both to our Dominions and to our own Mother Country here at home.

Mr. SNELL: My right hon. Friend the Member for Derby (Mr. Thomas) confined his remarks almost exclusively to what we may call the Dominion aspect of this great problem. I propose to devote myself rather to the Crown Colony and Protectorate side of it. I will, however, make one short exception in regard to the question of migration. I agree that if it is right that people should be migrated from one part of the Empire to another the progress is disappointingly slow, but I have never aroused in myself tremendous enthusiasm for the migration of other people, and I feel the very utmost we can do is to say that those who desire to go should have facilities provided for them. There should be no delays placed in their way, but there should be no cumbrous machinery to move them. In my judgment, many hon. Members, in estimating who are the kind of people to go, speak with only half knowledge of what is required. As one whose parents were both agricultural labourers and who himself was an agricultural labourer from early boyhood to early manhood, I detect

an unreality about a great deal of the advice that is given. It is not a question as to whether a townsman is fit or unfit, or a countryman is fit or unfit. The real problem is whether the man's soul, his spirit, has been divorced from Nature or contact with country life, and so on. If it has, it does not matter whether he is a townsman or a countryman, he will fail. If it has not, it does not matter whether he was born in a city or in the country, he will succeed. So the question is, not that farm labouring work is not hard work—some of it is desperately hard work—but the real point is whether the man has the knack of using tools and whether he has been prepared by training for the work that is put before him.

With that short exception, I should like to confine what I have to say to the question of the Crown Colonies and Protectorates. I would express, first of all, my very great disappointment that the report of the Under-Secretary for the Colonies on his visit to West Africa is not available for us. It would have been immensely interesting and I much regret that there has been so much delay in producing it. I should like to ask him certain questions in regard to it if only to provoke him into giving us some information. I should like to ask him first of all when an opportunity will be provided for it to be discussed in the House—whether in this part of the Session or in the Autumn Session. Secondly I should like him to tell us something about the social conditions prevailing in the territories that he visited, the economic conditions, the condition of the workers, whether they are prosperous in regard to earnings, how they are housed and what the provisions are for their education and general well being. I should like him to tell us something about the system of production in which they are engaged and any other special problem that came before his notice, but especially I should like to ask him something about the problem centring round the production of palm oil products.

How does that problem stand in West Africa at present? We should like to have information whether it is produced upon what we generally call the West African system or is the plantation system superseding that, and if so, with what results? I have no close knowledge

of this industry, but I believe prior to 1914 the native could collect and sell freely this product to anyone who wished to buy it, whether it was a member of our own or any other nation, and that he had in actuality a complete monopoly of that trade inasmuch as the particular palm which will produce this fruit will only grow in that one place in the world. In British West Africa alone there were collected 350,000 tons, or £6,000,000 worth of this product. In 1916 a Committee was set up presided over by the right hon. Gentleman who is now Minister of Labour, and it was recommended that a differential duty of not less than £2 per ton should be placed upon this commodity. It was not a War-time measure because it was never put into operation during that period, but in 1919 the Colonial Office urged the local Government to put the order into operation. They did so and it failed. It shows, in my judgment, that the very greatest care should be taken before we begin to play with preferential tariffs and preferences of any kind, for the result of the putting into operation of this order was that Holland, which had not previously produced this material, caught the idea of trying whether it could be produced in Sumatra. They tried, and the success has been not only extraordinary but has become something of a menace to our own industry.

Sir FRANK SANDERSON: I have some knowledge of the palm kernel industry, and I do not agree that the introduction of the export tax of £2 per ton was a mistake. My profound regret is that it was later withdrawn, and I look forward with considerable interest to the time when it is re-introduced, which is vital to the palm kernel industry of this country. It enabled us to divert that industry from Germany, which they enjoyed prior to the War, to the United Kingdom. Statistics show that since the withdrawal of that export tax, it has enabled Germany, to a great measure, to recapture that trade, and increase her imports of palm kernels from West Africa, whilst imports to the United Kingdom have unfortunately decreased, almost precisely at the same ratio, to the detriment of the seed-crushing industry.

Mr. SNELL: My submission was that if a differential duty had not been put