

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. MACLEAN. That statement may cause laughter, but the fact remains that these corporations have become so tyrannical in the United States that a man over 40 years of age cannot hold a position. They have not increased the wages of their employees as they should have done; but on the contrary they have reduced wages. They have become more tyrannical in specifying petty offences which if the men are guilty of they lose their employment. The great American people who claim that their country is the cradle of freedom are now oppressed under a slavery greater than the slavery that existed in the United States before the civil war. That is strong language, but there is not the slightest doubt that there is a new kind of slavery growing on the American continent. There is a slavery imposed by the trusts and the corporations greater than any slavery which existed before, and I am on this occasion taking the opportunity to warn our people in Canada to avoid if possible coming under the conditions which exist to-day in the United States. These corporations are grabbing all the power; they are grabbing all the wealth, and what is worse, the liberties of the people are passing under their yoke. We are told that while the trusts have become powerful, the average wealth of individuals in the United States and in Canada has increased. I grant that to some extent, but compared with the immense growth of the wealth of the trusts, the increased wealth of individuals amounts to nothing. The wealth concentrated in the hands of these corporations to-day constitutes a menace to the welfare of the United States, and it will be a menace to Canada if the same conditions should come to exist here. Not only are the corporations in the United States depriving the people of their freedom, but they have got control of the legislative bodies of that country, they have got control of the press, and they think they will soon have control of the judiciary. There is one thing certain and that is, that they have control of the machines connected with both of the great political parties in the United States. That being the condition of affairs in the neighbouring Republic, there is a great social crisis approaching. The people are not satisfied with the existing conditions. They are not satisfied with the growth of power of these corporations; they are not satisfied that their liberties are passing away and that a new serfdom is coming upon them. They are moving in one way or another to try and get rid of the existing conditions. That is the supreme issue in that country to-day. The men who are not mere politicians; the men who are studying the great social questions there, are pointing out that the growth of the trusts and the tyranny of the trusts must in some way be counteracted.

Now, are we threatened by these corporations in Canada? To my mind we are. We see signs every day of the growth of corporations in Canada in a way that is a menace to the people of this country and the political rights of our people. Look at what is taking place in parliament here, in our legislatures, and in our municipal councils. Things have taken place here in Ottawa in the interest of a corporation that have been in the nature of a raid on the political rights of the people. Look at what has taken place in the legislature of Quebec. That province has been raided up and down by the corporations. The city of Montreal has been raided in and out by the corporations to the detriment of the people. The same is happening to-day in the legislature of Ontario. The same thing has happened in the city of Toronto, and where is it all going to end? In the speech of His Excellency a reference is made to the application of the Canadian Pacific Railway for increased powers in regards to its stock issue, and the government congratulates the country on the fact that this great corporation has been good enough to agree that the question as to the regulation of its rates and the interpretation of the clause in its charter relating to that subject shall be submitted to the courts. What does all that mean? Here is a great corporation that is bound by its charter that its tolls shall be subject to government regulation when its profits amount to ten per cent on the actual cost of the road; and all we get to-day for the increased power of capitalization is a promise that this question shall be submitted to the courts. Why did the government not do what they did with the Canadian Pacific Railway on a former occasion? If they gave the company this additional privilege, why did they not fix the date when the regulation of the freight rates of the railway should go into effect? But all we get is this bald promise that this question shall be submitted to the courts. That again is an evidence of the growth of these corporations and the control they exercise over parliament and over this government.

Now, these great trust managers, these men who are in favour of all these great corporations, say that they have been created for two things: in order to cheapen production and in order to supply the capital necessary for the conduct of these great industries. I do not agree with that for one moment. If there is a characteristic of these corporations, it is that they do not reduce prices, but by monopolization they over-capitalize the corporation and force the public to give them hundreds of dollars for hundreds of dollars of watered stock. That is what the public get out of it. They simply get over-capitalization and nothing else. The other defence is that Wall street and the great money centres which are allied with these great corporations supply the capital, and that it could not be got in any