

enormously immediately after the outbreak of the war. Trade was almost paralysed; importation almost stopped, and exportation as well, and in the midst of that we found ourselves confronted with a very serious condition in a very large district in western Canada, in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta, a district much larger than some of the other provinces of Canada. There was this condition confronting us: the revenues of the country, as my honourable friend the Minister of Finance graphically described them, were shot to pieces on the one hand, and on the other hand there was the need for some assistance to the people in that drought-stricken district. We had the alternative, to display a lack of courage and to say that, confronted by a war such as was upon us, with shrunken revenues, it would be impossible for the Government to do anything, or, to attack the problem in a courageous way and do what we could to relieve the situation. We determined to relieve the situation and we spent \$12,000,000 in providing supplies for the people, fodder for their cattle, and seed grain. I believe that seven and a half million dollars' worth of seed grain went into that district in the following spring. It required some courage to do that, and I venture to say that this expenditure of \$12,000,000 so made by the Government has brought in at least \$100,000,000 of wealth and has maintained a happy, prosperous, confident population in a district which otherwise would have been partially depopulated; and I believe that practically every dollar of that money will be paid back. It was not handed out as a gift; it was handed out as a loan by this parliament. Gentlemen from the West who are not affiliated with the party to which I belong have concurred with me that probably one hundred million dollars' worth of production had resulted from the action of the Government on that occasion. I am not speaking of this in any boastful way; we did it because it was our duty to do it, and if we had lacked the courage to undertake it at that time we would not have been fit for the positions we hold. I have spoken of its direct benefit to the country, and indirectly it has been of enormous advantage, because of the splendid production in that very district not only last year, but this year as well. Confidence has been re-established. Conditions such as occurred in 1914 are of very infrequent occurrence, and the people of that district may con-

[Sir Robert Borden.]

tinue in their work of progress and development without undue apprehension.

There is another consideration which I would like to impress upon the House and the country. The commercial and financial stability of Canada during the past two years have been maintained to an extent which was not anticipated by the most optimistic among us two and a half years ago. That has been largely due to two considerations: first, to the abundant crops of the first year, and the high prices obtained therefor, and the still higher prices realized for the less abundant crop of the past year. It is due also to the vast orders for munitions and supplies of various kinds which have come to Canada as a land of great production, and of great possibilities. Without wearying the House with figures, let me allude to the conditions which we find at the close of 1916. The total trade of the country for the twelve months ending 31st December, 1916,—I am including coin and bullion—was as follows: imports, \$766,733,991; exports, \$1,091,706,403, or a total trade for Canada of \$1,850,440,394. I do not wish to be understood as attaching too much importance to these figures. I realize, of course, that a considerable proportion of this amount is due to the higher prices which have been obtained. I realize that a considerable amount of it is due to the production of munitions of war which we cannot expect to continue after the war is over. But even with all these qualifications, it is a remarkable result. I remember when I had been in this House for, I think, four years, in 1900 or 1901, the late Sir Richard Cartwright spoke proudly of the fact that the total trade of this country was approaching the four hundred million mark. I remember precisely his expression—the four hundred million mark. The total trade of this country to-day is approaching the two thousand million mark, and it is very likely that by the 31st of March next it will reach that figure, because I observe that during the first nine months of the present fiscal year, that is the nine months beginning on the 1st day of April and ending on the 31st December last, the total trade of Canada was \$1,464,503,766, embracing: imports, \$602,873,953, and exports \$861,629,813. It is a gratifying feature that the exports of Canada have shown a very large increase over the imports.

For the twelve months ended December 31, 1916, the excess of exports over imports was about \$325,000,000, and for the nine months of that period ending December 31, 1916, it was \$259,000,000. It will be observed, and it is worthy of note, that the exporta-