

what I have in mind. When this war broke out the first thing we did, apparently thinking it necessary, was to restrict the travel conditions between ourselves and the United States. So did the United States; they thought they had to tighten up travel conditions from their country to ours. So we went on, on both sides of the line, to a system of passports and visas, exchange regulations and departmental interference, and we succeeded in tightening up—there is no doubt about that—so much so that we checked business as between the two great and neighbouring countries and went some distance towards ruining our tourist trade by too much restraint. I point this out because I want to emphasize the fact that restrictive legislation is a two-edged sword which cuts in both directions and is likely to destroy more than is gained by it.

Let me give another illustration. Canada has had some very sad experiences in high protective tariffs. We had the experimentation of the Bennett regime.

Mr. MacNICOL: The best the country ever had.

Mr. ROEBUCK: Well, the hon. gentleman must have been a beneficiary of Mr. Bennett's tariffs, but most of those who paid do not feel that way about it. The high tariffs of the Bennett regime were restrictive legislation carried to an extreme, and this destroyed a very large amount of the business and producing power of the Canadian people. Yet when we entered this war the first thing we did was to increase our tariff by ten per cent and abolish the free list. I am not saying we should not have done that, but I realize what its effect was. It might have been inevitable. It might have been necessary. But let us look at it and look it plainly in the face. We abolish the free list; we cut down our trade with our neighbours, and I am under the impression, Mr. Speaker, that we seriously decreased the producing power of our people.

The importance of trade restriction is, of course, very great. We have discussed it in this house for many years. It has been a subject of debate ever since I was a boy at school. But, almost equal to the evil effects of too high a restrictive tariff you get those deadly interferences with industry itself within the country—such, for instance, as the boards of control, and these individual controllers who boss industry in our country at the moment. Whether or not they have axes to grind I do not know, but I do know that you cannot have maximum production among business men and manufacturers and farmers and other producers while you attempt to interfere with and boss them and direct their efforts.

[Mr. Roebuck.]

My point is that if the Canadian people are to produce as I hope and expect and confidently anticipate they will during this coming year, the country and the government should realize that, to the extent of our ability in view of the war conditions under which we work, they should be left free.

Almost as important as free men and their ability to go to work is the putting to work of our natural resources. Both should go to work. Both must go to work if we are going to carry this load in ease and comfort. Let me give an illustration, not from our own community but from across the water—that is always safer, because you do not tread on any local toes. I hold in my hand a document entitled "Bulletins from Britain." It is published by the British Library of Information. It quotes Mr. Robert Hudson, Minister of Agriculture, who, it says, has just told the story of the successful efforts to revive agriculture in the homeland. It says:

For a period of 20 years, after a brief revival in the last war, half the agricultural land in Britain has suffered a steady deterioration. . . . Over large areas fields were used merely as exercising grounds, the cattle on them being fed on imported foodstuffs; whole districts, once fertile and employing 40 men on every thousand acres, were without a single ploughman; staffs were cut down, drainage and hedges neglected, buildings allowed to fall into disrepair. . . .

The government has made a survey of the entire problem, established agricultural committees in each county to visit every farm and determine what grass fields are suitable for ploughing.

Already between three and four million acres have been ploughed, land that had been "lost" for centuries has been made fertile again.

This is not a new statement of fact: I have seen it from other sources, but this is from the Minister of Agriculture of Great Britain. One thing in the statement that strikes me is the utter waste, in the days that have gone by of the three or four million acres now ploughed, and another is the resolution which the British government is demonstrating in bringing these acres back into production. I am wondering how many lost acres there may be in the Dominion of Canada, how many natural resources such as these in England are lying fallow and unused; whether it would not be in order for the government of this country to make a survey of our natural resources and see that they too shall go to work. Not that they should necessarily be ploughed, because that applies to agricultural land alone; but of all our natural resources, those of the towns, those of the countryside, those of the forest and mining areas, how many are half used or not used at all, and how many should be used at this time when producing power is a term which everyone should use as a slogan?