

fitable and that the farmers are hampered in their circumstances, than to find, instead of paying off their indebtedness, they are largely increasing it. I have always believed that it was the duty, both of this Government and of the Local Government, to have investigated this matter, to have ascertained and put on record the increase or diminution of mortgage indebtedness, especially on farms, from year to year; and I regret much that neither one nor the other of these Governments has seen fit to do so. As the Governments would not act, and as I had cause to know that this indebtedness was increasing enormously, I took such means as were fairly open to me to ascertain what was the extent of the mortgage indebtedness of the Ontario farmers, and I am going to submit to this House a brief statement, based on actual investigation, which may, perhaps, open the eyes of some people here and more people in the country to the condition at which the farmers of Ontario have arrived. I caused eleven ridings to be selected in various parts of the country, such as, in my honest judgment, afforded the fairest samples of its condition. Among those, I selected certain townships and certain concessions; and I have here from the reports of the registry offices of those counties a rather remarkable statement, to which I call the particular attention of my hon. friends from Ontario, showing the extent of the mortgage indebtedness among the farmers of this Province. In the first group I found that in one single concession, covering 10,200 acres, the mortgage indebtedness was returned at \$139,983; in a second constituency in a concession of 5,600 acres the mortgage indebtedness was returned at \$146,271. In another group in a concession containing 6,400 acres, the mortgage indebtedness was \$93,906, and in another concession in the same group of 4,600 acres, the mortgage indebtedness was \$57,288; in the fifth case, in a concession of 4,220 acres, there was a mortgage indebtedness of \$55,850; and in the sixth case in a concession of 6,800 acres, there was a debt of \$84,300. In the fourth group in a concession of 5,600 acres, there was an indebtedness of \$59,062, and in the second case, in a concession of 4,600 acres, there was an indebtedness of \$79,900; in the fifth group, in a concession of 5,600 acres, the indebtedness amounted to \$92,441; and on one of 7,200 acres, it amounted to \$150,361. In no case were any village properties included, in no case were any farms of less than 50 acres put down. Now, I would like to call the attention of the country to what that means. If these assessments fairly represent the indebtedness of the respective counties in which they are made, and if those counties are, as I have every reason to believe, a fair sample of the condition of the various rural constituencies throughout Ontario, then you are confronted with this alarming state of facts, that in the greater number, probably, of the older settled townships of the Province of Ontario, the average indebtedness of a township, according to its size, will range from \$500,000 up to one million dollars; that the average indebtedness of each constituency, according to its size, will range to two or three millions; and that the total mortgage indebtedness of the Province of Ontario is probably well over 200 million, if it does not attain to 300 million dollars.

Mr. SPROULE. How much of these mortgages are paid off?

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. None of these mortgages were paid off in the cases to which I refer. The registrars took great care to say that they returned none that were paid off. On the contrary I fear that if a critical analysis had been made, it would be found that there was a large amount of interest in arrear on those mortgages, and the true indebtedness was considerably in excess of what I had stated. Now, if these samples, which were taken fairly and without prejudice, at all represent or are a fair average of the general condition of the Province of Ontario, then, in the largest and richest of our agricultural Provinces to-day, one-half of all the farms there would be mortgaged within two-thirds of their actual selling value. At this present moment the total assessed value of the entire Province of Ontario is something like 429 million dollars, and though that sum is considerably below the actual value, it needs no great degree of calculation to see what a proportion such a mortgage indebtedness as I have alluded to would involve. That means that a very large proportion of the once prosperous farmers of the Province of Ontario have sunk below the level of tenants at will, that they are in a worse position to-day in Canada than if they held their property at a landlord's caprice, because I hold that a man who is mortgaged to such an extent is in a more helpless position, and less likely to extricate himself, than even a tenant at will could be. If the Government of Canada, or any of their supporters, dispute this assertion—and I am merely giving it as the results at which I have arrived after considerable care and after taking all precautions which could be taken—it is easy for the Government, by devoting a few thousands to the task, to obtain from the registrars of the Province of Ontario a perfect answer, either in confirmation or refutation of the statement which I now make in my place in Parliament. I may tell the hon. gentleman from Grey (Mr. Sproule) who interrupted me just now, that in the cases where I myself examined the records of registry offices, there was no one fact which was more painful, no fact which was more apparent than this, that within the last few years mortgages had increased in an almost preternatural rapidity, both in number and in amount. Now, Sir, simultaneously with this, there has ensued in Ontario an enormous depreciation in the value of farm land. Here I am prepared to admit that there is room for considerable difference of opinion, but as to the main fact that there has been a great depreciation, there is no possibility of doubt. I will be prepared to hear very different opinions advanced. All I can say is this: I have had occasion, in the discharge of my political duties, to visit nearly every county in Ontario repeatedly for some years, and wherever I have gone I made it a point, knowing that it was a question on the answer to which a great deal depended, to make careful enquiry as to the extent of the depreciation that had occurred. I took precautions wherever I could, not to get mere guesses, but to obtain the records of actual sales made in the different localities. I know well that the estimates which have been put forward, particularly by Mr. Blue, may differ in one or two respects, may differ perhaps to a considerable extent, from the results at which I have arrived; but in making these estimates I wish the House to understand that I am speaking of the