

Shawinigan and Three Rivers, a number of mills manufacturing various kinds of paper and employing, in normal times, a great number of people—it must be admitted, I say, that this industry is, at present, greatly affected, and if conditions so far have not improved, it is entirely due to the provincial government.

It is only fair to credit the present administration with having adjusted our balance of trade. Stabilization, we are aware, is what is needed most, at present, in our economic structure. An unreasonable overproduction, added to greatly perfected machinery, were the cause of our storing up large quantities of goods of all kinds, an abundance which has, up to this day, been unparalleled; however, the lack of stabilization which is felt, immobilizes, so to speak, this great acquired wealth and prevents its normal distribution. It is only just to credit our government for this rapid adjustment of our trade balance, which, at one time, unfavourably upset and threatened to greatly accentuate this economic embarrassment from which we suffer.

It is a truism to state: the purchasing power of a country decreases when there is an excess of its imports over its exports. The Prime Minister was therefore right in expressing, at the outset of this session, his great satisfaction at seeing matters set right in that respect. This adjustment is due to the foresight and initiative of the statesmanship of the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett). He realized and acted immediately, stopping by his tariff an excess of importations, thus protecting us.

The Dominion government has already contributed a lump sum of \$26,586,762 to municipal and provincial works, to the building and maintenance of provincial and national highways—Quebec's quota in this grant amounts to \$4,642,807.06. But this assistance, notwithstanding its magnitude, did not, we must admit, entirely relieve the economic depression. The time has come to decide whether the government can and must renew the aid already extended. They have, in the past pledged our national credit by coming to the assistance of our jeopardized railways, guaranteeing also their bonds; they have also helped out the western provinces which were in a precarious situation owing to the lack of markets for their wheat. It behooves the leaders of the party in power to decide whether the credit of our country can be further pledged to relieve the present crisis.

It is unnecessary to say, because it is evident that, unless bankruptcy is at our door, the government must in order to relieve unemployment again pledge our credit. This is a most urgent matter, and, as far as Quebec is concerned, I humbly suggest—since I am in no way an economist—that it is mainly in the return to the land that our hopes rest. I have no fear in stating that, in Quebec, the ever increasing wave of emigration towards the cities, and also towards the United States, has resulted in considerably changing the ratio which existed between the towns and the rural sections. I daresay that if we added the figures representing the populations of Montreal, Quebec, Three Rivers, Sherbrooke, Shawinigan Falls, Chicoutimi, Rimouski, Coaticook, Hull and other cities and also large villages, which are to all purposes small towns, the urban population would amount to 75 per cent of the total people of Quebec:

I read in *Le Droit*, in its issue of Friday, April 22, 1932, the following article, "The Return to the Land," signed by Charles Gautier:

It is generally recognized that the return to the land movement is the best remedy to the present economic crisis, that it will also be the means to prevent in the future similar crisis, or at least lessen its virulence.

But, apart from the question of crisis and unemployment, farm settlement is necessary in a country where the city population is far too large and where that of the countryside is decreasing every decade.

Mr. Edouard Montpetit recently verified this fact, the ratio is upset between the population of cities and that of the rural districts. In a country where agriculture is the source of its greatest wealth, the rural population is not sufficiently large.

Take, for instance, Quebec. In the course of the last ten years, the total population of the province increased by 513,610. Out of this increase, according to statistics, the cities absorbed 491,047, while the rural sections only absorbed 22,553.

"Our rural population, writes Mr. Joseph Dandurand, in 'l'Action Catholique' has fallen to 36.9 per cent from 44 per cent which it was in 1921; from 51.8 per cent in 1911; from 60 per cent in 1901; from 66.4 per cent in 1891; from 77.1 per cent in 1881; from 80.5 per cent in 1871."

Yet, it is not the number of farms or the lack of land which is at fault. One needs but to travel through a few counties of Quebec to verify that many farms formerly in excellent condition are now fallow land. In many localities a large number of farmers who had settled in the back concessions have left for the cities or the United States.

At six o'clock the house took recess.