

condition of the farmers in any given country. To me it appears that our first duty is to ascertain how rapidly the rural population in the Dominion of Canada is increasing, how much the value of farm land in Canada is increasing, how far the indebtedness of the farmers has increased, how high they are taxed; and, in the last place, how fast the settlement of unoccupied lands is advancing. Here I must perforce take the Province of Ontario as the best illustration I can get of the actual condition of the farming population. Not only is it the largest and richest Province, but here we have got, on the whole, tolerably clear and satisfactory evidence of what is going forward, more so at all events than we are as yet able to obtain in any other Province. I want to call the attention of the House to the growth of the rural population of the Province of Ontario within two periods; one covering the Administration of Mr. Mackenzie, and the other covering the Administration of the hon. gentleman who succeeded him. Sir, it is noteworthy, and it would be well for those who represent agricultural constituencies to call the attention of their voters to it. I find that in the years from 1872 to 1879 the rural population of Ontario increased 84,603 souls. I find that from 1879 to 1888 the rural population of Ontario increased a little less than 11,000 souls; in the seven years under the Administration of Mr. Mackenzie chiefly, the rural population of Ontario—which I submit is a very good test of the prosperity of the farmers—increased eight times more than it did in a period of nine years under the Administration of the hon. gentleman opposite. And, Sir, it is well to remember that that increase under the Mackenzie régime took place against that all but absolutely stationary condition under his successor, in spite of the fact that a large amount of new territory was thrown open in Ontario, that many thousands of miles of railway were constructed in the period from 1879 to 1888, whereby a great impetus ought to have been given to the growth of the rural population. Even at the risk of somewhat wearying my hon. friends, I must call their attention to a statement which has been furnished to me, showing how the rural population in fifty constituencies in Ontario has retrograded during the last nine years. The figures are as follows:—

RURAL POPULATION, ONTARIO.

	1879.	1888.
Kent.....	30,847	29,816
Elgin.....	27,772	26,420
Norfolk.....	25,200	23,279
Haldimand.....	15,540	16,803
Welland.....	19,199	17,965
Huron.....	51,592	48,451
Grey.....	59,203	54,549
Bruce.....	45,176	41,759
Middlesex.....	50,861	50,837
Oxford.....	30,106	28,881
Perth.....	32,719	29,334
Wellington.....	37,203	35,079
Lincoln.....	15,982	14,311
Halton.....	14,910	13,811
Peel.....	18,973	18,145
York.....	46,258	39,866
Ontario.....	33,468	30,496
Durham.....	22,632	22,617
Northumberland.....	26,686	25,967
Prince Edward.....	15,473	13,977
Lennox and Addington.....	18,906	18,148
Leeds and Grenville.....	39,852	37,313
Glengarry.....	18,590	18,113
Lennox.....	21,333	20,889
Victoria.....	22,112	20,752

Now, out of eighty-three rural constituencies in Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT.

the Province of Ontario, in fifty the rural population had actually retrograded. Many of the remainder were absolutely stationary, hardly one, with the exception of those which were perfectly new territories, had maintained its natural increase. Will hon. gentlemen opposite dare to assert, in the face of these figures, that the whole Province of Ontario is already filled up, that there is no room there for agriculturists or settlers, and that the state of things which exists there is a natural and wholesome condition of affairs? I turn to the Hand Book of this Dominion, which was laid on the Table last night, and I see there that the total area of Ontario is 181,000 square miles, or 115,000,000 acres. Now, I suppose, if I or anybody on this side had dared to insinuate that this was not all good land, we would have been accused of being woefully unpatriotic. Nevertheless, I cannot say that I consider the whole of these 115,000,000 acres perfectly good land, but I do believe that a very large portion of it is quite capable of profitable agriculture; and I ask: What can be thought about such a state of things as this? We have but a little more than 200,000 families engaged in agriculture in the Province of Ontario, with its area of 181,000 square miles, or one square mile to each family; and we have an enormous extent, fully equal to that now occupied, of good land waiting cultivation; and yet in nine years the total rural population of the great Province of Ontario has increased less than 11,000 souls. Why, if I look at the municipal returns, I find that the total occupied land in Ontario, in the year 1887, was given at 21,799,000 acres, of which 11,108,000 acres were returned as cleared. So that of 115,000,000 acres, which is the nominal area of Ontario, 11,108,000 appear to be cleared; and yet the population of that Province, during nine long years of the Administration of the right hon. gentleman, has remained positively stationary. It has gained but 1 per cent. in that period, the natural increase of population being something like 2½ per cent. per year. In the meantime, if the hon. the Minister of Agriculture's statistics are to be relied upon, we have imported into Canada many hundreds of thousands of immigrants, the greater portion of whom must clearly, if they have stayed here at all, have settled in the Province of Ontario. Now, not merely is it clear from this evidence that the rural population of that great Province is perfectly stationary, but I say that, with such an area as I have described unoccupied, a stationary state is a retrogressive state; and I ask, is it our misfortune or our fault that such a state of things has been created that we cannot keep the natives of our own country here, but they must leave our shores by the hundred thousands, and that, when we bring out at great expense hundred of thousands of emigrants, we cannot keep them either? I turn to the second part of my investigation. It is clear, as I have shown, that there is no increase of the rural population—but what of the other proofs of prosperity, and, more particularly, what of the amount of indebtedness existing among the farmers of Ontario? It is quite true—I am not disposed to dispute the proposition—that in newly settled countries an increase of indebtedness is not always a proof that the country has retrograded; but, in old settled countries, I say there is no clearer proof that farming has become unpro-