

they came into this country and of what they have accomplished since their arrival and settlement.

It has not infrequently been said in this house that agriculture is the basic industry of Canada. This is not a bald statement; it is axiomatic, and despite the fact that the agricultural producer has taken a tremendous shrinkage in his income, that statement is just as true to-day as ever in our history. An examination of the five principal sources of export wealth of this country during the past five years will indicate that in each year wheat has been our chief source of export wealth; and a further examination of this same table will also indicate that wheat flour, in each of the five years, has been within the classification of these five. It seems to me, therefore, that, without reference to the other extensive sources of export agricultural wealth, it is not too bold a statement to make in this house that in the welfare of the producer of wheat is to a very considerable extent wrapped up the welfare of a substantial portion of the population of Canada; not only the welfare of him who produces wheat but the welfare of numerous cities, towns and villages which are part and parcel of the wheat field; the welfare of thousands of railway men in eastern and western Canada engaged in hauling the crop, and thousands engaged in terminal elevators, in our flour industry and in shipping; and, finally, the vast amount of purchasing power which all these groups do give to the benefit of industry throughout Canada. It is not without just claim, therefore, that the wheat producer has from time to time made certain requests of this house.

While the west is favoured with a bounteous crop; while we have learned to produce wheat more cheaply than we ever dreamed before that we could produce it, I am sorry to say that this great crop, having regard to present price levels, is not of extensive avail. When I left my own small village less than ten days ago wheat was selling for about twenty-five cents per bushel. One-fifth of this is immediately absorbed in the cost of threshing; to this must be added the cost of harvesting, the cost of twine, the cost of seed, cost of summer fallow, wages and one charge and another; and finally the principal and interest on the agricultural debt. When this is taken into consideration, it must be obvious to all that nothing remains for the labours of production. The wheat producer hopes that an adjustment of price levels affecting his commodity is imminent. I am certain of this: that in the far west he cannot continue in business indefinitely unless some such adjustment is forthcoming.

I wish to refer for a few minutes to the trade and commerce of this country, particularly with respect to agricultural commodities. Much has been said by hon. members opposite that the policies of this government are in the direction of a progressive strangulation of Canadian trade. To me, that observation is merely another evidence of the fact that there are some hon. members opposite who are oblivious of the conditions of the world at the present time. Some hon. members appear blind to the extraordinary conditions which this government has had to face.

I am sure that no hon. member will question this statement: the world would be better off to-day if we had a general reduction in tariffs. But surely we can profit from the experience of the mother country? It is now a matter of history as to how England clung with that bull dog tenacity which is characteristic of her people to that principle which has been for so long the foundation of her fiscal system,—the policy of free trade. She watched other great trading nations of the world extend their restrictions against her trade. She watched her exports decline. She watched imports mount. She watched prices fall. She watched unemployment increase. Finally, when she had been bled, and bled, and bled; finally when her monetary system was in a state of bankruptcy; finally, when her entire internal economy was upset, England woke up. England adopted a general tariff, not because she wanted to, but because she had to in order to cope with world conditions.

So, while I join with other hon. members in deploring the present condition of world trade, I have no reason to think that a general reduction in our tariffs would help this country to sell more produce to other countries, unless such tariff reduction would be international, mutual and simultaneous.

I should like to congratulate the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Stevens) for the extent to which he has been successful not only in preserving the trade of this country but, in many cases, in extending it. I am indebted to the Economic Committee of the League of Nations for information which indicates that during the period January, 1930, to January, 1932, the commerce of the world declined by practically one-half, when compared with the peak year of 1929. A further examination of the tables compiled by that committee indicates that, comparatively speaking, we in Canada are exceedingly fortunate. I would like to read into Hansard the portion of those tables which indicates the falling off in the imports and exports of certain countries. The following figures com-