

Honourable gentlemen know that in the fiscal year 1928 our export of automobiles dropped by \$5,000,000 while our imports increased by \$20,000,000. But do honourable gentlemen appreciate the fact that in that same year our exports of lumber, the product of the forest and the labour of the Canadian people, decreased by \$13,000,000 as compared with the preceding year?

I call particular attention to these items with a view of making clear the fact that with curtailed exports and increased imports of dairy and manufactured products, the absorption of immigrants becomes a problem that is not so easy of solution as may appear at first glance.

Now may we turn for a moment to our manufacturing industries? It was truly said in another place a couple of days ago that neither that element of society that lives on the land and is commonly known as farmers, nor that large portion of our people classified as industrial workers, has been particularly prosperous during the past year. They have had employment, perhaps, to as great an extent as during some years past, but they have not advanced in wealth; on the contrary, they have been barely able to live. The statistics of the Department of Labour show that while employment opportunities have been equal to, or a little better than, those for some years preceding, the earnings of our workmen have not increased, although there has been a slight movement upward in the cost of living.

In 1911 Canada had a population of about 6½ millions, and in 1921 we numbered 8 millions, or a little more, an increase of approximately 1½ millions for the ten years. Yet the Government's own records show that approximately 7,000 fewer people were employed in manufacturing plants in Canada in 1925 than in 1910. That appeared to me as a very startling fact, when I discovered it. I found that in 1917 we had 552,968 wage earners employed in Canada's forty leading industries, and in 1925 these same industries employed 466,602 workers—a decrease of roughly 86,000. These workers earned an average of \$760 each in 1917 and \$971 each in 1925, an increase of 27 per cent, which increase was approximately in keeping with the advance in the cost of living during the same period. I leave it to the judgment of honourable gentlemen whether in 1928, on an average annual income of the size I have mentioned, there was any great opportunity to prosper available to those 466,000 industrial workers, probably the majority of them being the heads of families and maintaining homes.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON.

Again, of the nearly half a million employees in manufacturing industries in Canada, 23 per cent are women and girls. We find that the heads of families are being gradually crowded out of employment, while their places are being taken by those who have not the same responsibilities.

I think it is therefore clear that the manufacturing industry is not absorbing, and consequently is not requiring, very many immigrants. The fact that its requirements are becoming less and less each year is not due to a decrease in the volume of production, for the figures show there has been a substantial increase. I think it is clear to anyone who considers the situation why immigration is more difficult to obtain and absorb now than it was in 1913 and prior thereto. The advance of science, the improvement of mechanical equipment, and the tremendous advance in efficiency of operation and management of Canadian industries have so increased production and lessened labour requirements that increased immigration cannot be absorbed into our industrial life under present conditions.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: That is the old story that has been repeated for centuries.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: Now, my honourable friend the leader of the Government, and I think the mover of this motion, as well as the Prime Minister in another place, referred to transportation. Some of them made the statement that transportation could be fairly considered a promoter of the industries. To a very large extent that is true, but when my honourable friend refers to the transportation activities of Canada as being also prosperous I do not know whether he has clearly in his own mind the whole story as to how that actually came to be.

He referred to this House not having approved of certain branch line extensions that were asked for a few years ago. There were over twenty branch lines included in a blanket Bill, and the House felt that Canada had an over-supply of railroads. I beg to remind my honourable friend that there was another reason: this House declined to approve of such a blanket program without some knowledge in detail of the purposes for which the money was to be spent, and where the lines were to run.

Right Hon. Mr. GRAHAM: They changed their minds a couple of years later and did approve of it.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: The 28 that my honourable friend refers to were disapproved of.