

As a matter of fact, two-thirds of the public expenditure is uncontrollable; it cannot be altered one way or the other, no matter what the government may do. As against that increase in our public debt, the United States has been claiming payments from Britain, for supplies furnished during the war, an amount which, if I mistake not, is twice as large as our entire public debt after the war—something like four billions of dollars which will be paid in full over a series of years. When the conditions in Canada are compared with those in the United States, the true patriot is the man who will emphasize to the Canadian people the condition in which this country finds itself at present and the reasons why it has come into that position relative to the great country to the south.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Will the Prime Minister permit a question? Will he not admit that the American debt per capita three years ago was as great as the debt of Canada per capita? Does not that answer his whole contention?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I have not the figures of the debt per capita, but I have given a statement, which I think my right hon. friend will not question, as to the different positions occupied by the two countries at the time of which I speak. Now, may I continue what I was saying bearing upon immigration?

At the time that large numbers of men were coming back to Canada for demobilization here; at the time that we were suffering from a surplus of labour seeking occupation, there was a very considerable boom in the United States. Men in the United States who had made vast sums of money during the war were spending money freely. Then the United States decided—and this helps to explain the immigration that flowed from Canada to that country—to introduce what is known as its quota law, designed to prohibit more than a certain number of persons from coming into the United States from Europe. They passed a law which provided that after a certain percentage of the existing number of peoples from the European countries had come in, no other persons from those countries were to enter the United States in that year. But that law did not apply to Canada, and the result was that with the boom prevailing in the United States at the time, with the vacuum created in the labour market of that country by the quota law, a large number of mechanics and others from Canada crossed the border, as they are accustomed to do and have been doing from the days of confederation down to the present,

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

to seek temporary employment and to get what benefit they could from the building boom to the south.

There is one further point to be remembered in connection with the crossing over to the United States, and it is this: no man can leave Canada to take up employment in the United States under contract expressed or implied; otherwise he is violating the Alien Labour Act of the United States and is liable to be returned. The only way a man can get into the United States and hope to enjoy the benefit of an opening in a trade or industry, of which he may have learned from a friend or in connection with which he may have received some promise of employment, is to declare that he is an immigrant. The result is that thousands of men who had no thought whatever of becoming permanent citizens of the United States, men who were out of employment temporarily in Canada and desired to take advantage of the boom in the United States, declared that they were immigrants. When the particular work that they went to the United States to engage in was over—it may have lasted two, three, up to four, five or six months—they came back to Canada.

Unfortunately our immigration department kept no statistics of those who came back; there are therefore no statistics to set over against the figures recording the numbers who crossed over to the United States temporarily. We did start keeping a record in the month of March last, of those coming into Canada from the United States last year, who had been in the United States at least six months and under three years, and the figures show that they have been returning at the rate of 4,000 a month. Some 50,000 odd have come back within the last year who had been in the United States over six months and under three years. Our records do not show those who have been over there under a period of six months, but as every hon. gentleman who has a constituency alongside the American frontier, or even some distance remote from the frontier, knows, persons are crossing over to the United States at all seasons of the year—a certain number of men and some with their families, who go over there for a short time, very frequently, less than six months, and come back. All these people are shown by the United States authorities as immigrants. No record is kept in our department of their return to this country. Now may I be permitted to ask, is it not the part of patriotism, when people are struggling, as our people are, to improve conditions, to let the country know the truth, to put plainly before the people a circumstance as vital as that?