

Let me say in passing that I do not speak of the experience of Canada as anything peculiar to us, as anything discouraging to this Dominion. As I see it, this Dominion is the most prosperous place in civilization. I say that without any reservation. Thanks to the courage and enterprise of the Canadian people, as a people, our prosperity has been and continues to be unexampled, particularly in comparison with that of the United States, Australia, or the Mother Country. I have no words of gloom or discouragement to speak about the Canadian situation, but I do say that amongst all British people we are alone in having had up to the present a Government that failed to recognize it had any duty in the circumstances, and that was content to allow us to drift, in the hands of Providence solely, and ignored what we have all been taught, and, I think, believe—that Providence helps those who help themselves.

We have now a Government determined that Canadians, through their Parliament, shall help themselves, and in the Speech from the Throne we are promised legislation that will enable Canadians to be put to work, and will give to industry of all kinds in Canada the courage that will prevent the further displacement of staffs—a displacement that can easily be blamed upon the late Administration, because it has been caused not so much by any actual hardship on the part of employers as by the widespread feeling of uncertainty that prevailed as to the future so long as we drifted without a controlling Government.

I have no intention of going into subjects that would be proper to the debate on the Address on an occasion other than this, where Parliament is called for a special purpose. If the occasion were different I should like to take the recent heads of a number of departments for a "ride," and make plain to them something that many citizens of Canada think. But those are subjects that can be dealt with on another occasion. I should like, however, for a few minutes to recall how closely the incidents occurring in country and Parliament to-day are following those that took place when I first had any knowledge of public affairs. I came into the precincts of this Parliament—in a very humble capacity, it is true—fifty-two years ago. Let me say that I was not a member or a senator; I was a messenger boy for a then member of Parliament, and my duty was to act as liaison officer between the press gallery and the printing room of the establishment where I drew my twenty-five cents a day. As a small boy I looked over the heads in the press gallery at the great men

assembled on the floor below, and I wondered that the Almighty, with the powers that He possessed, permitted men so great—in my estimation, of course—to exist without showing His jealousy of them. They were very great men indeed. On the side of Parliament opposite to where my immediate attention was centred I saw the Hon. Alexander MacKenzie, who was then directing the fortunes of his party. I never heard anything to the detriment of the Hon. Alexander MacKenzie. Even as a boy, and ever since, I had nothing but admiration for the man and his sterling character. It was often mentioned that he was Scotch, and close in the expenditure of money. Anything more harsh I think I never heard. We had a great respect for him. But, as I remember it, the criticism of his Government was that its members had announced publicly—I was going to say shamelessly, but that is not the proper word—publicly, that, although they sat in the seats of the mighty, they were mere flies upon the wheel. That was the expression coined by one of its own members: "We are mere flies upon the wheel and cannot control the course of nature." The course of nature of that day had necessitated in the city of Ottawa, as well as in other cities of Canada, soup kitchens where men just as good as any of us were carrying down their little pails, and were given soup and a loaf of bread to take to their starving families. Other men just as good as any of us were sitting on stone piles breaking stone at sixty cents a toise, in the middle of winter, and the Government of the day said: "We are mere flies upon the wheel and cannot control the course of nature"; just as the late Government said a few months ago, "All these things are so; the revenue is gone, the trade is gone; but we have 250,000,000 bushels of unsold wheat."

The Conservative party of that day took exception to that ideal of government, and an appeal was made to the people of Canada, and then, as now, the Conservative party succeeded in having placed in power a Government that promised to do something to try to change the condition of affairs and to put those idle men at some work other than their daily wanderings from home to the soup kitchens. I well remember the result.

I hear people say now that the leader of the new Government has made very lavish promises throughout Canada, that he will put to work every person who desires to work; and they ask, "How is he going to accomplish it?" The same idea prevailed fifty years ago. I can give you in a few words an illustration of how quickly the idea of prosperity bore