

Conscription Act of 1917. Those were dark and terrible days, but we came through. Is there anything happening here today that compares to what we suffered during the First World War?

Look back again for a minute. In 1933, one out of every five people in the labour force was out of work. In cities, one out of two was without a job. I find it misleading and mischievous when, from time to time, I read or hear that we are in a hopeless state because there are more unemployed in Canada than there were during the depression. In actual numbers that is true. Today about 850,000 people are out of work; in 1933, 826,000 were unemployed. However, these statistics take on a different emphasis when we consider that 45 years ago there were only 7,300,000 people over 14 in the country while today there are 17½ million. Unemployment for all of Canada during the depression amounted to a bit more than 19 per cent of the labour force. Today it is 8½ per cent, but 8½ per cent is, of course, too much and is causing worry and hardship. The Throne Speech indicates that new efforts will be made to increase Canada's productivity so that more jobs will be available. It is proper that we should be worried about unemployment, and the inflation that is so cruel to pensioners and poor people. Nevertheless, the truth is that the difficult times we are going through today bear no resemblance to what happened to us during the great depression.

I was living in Montreal at that time. The streets were full of beggars, and half a dozen times a day men knocked at the door asking for handouts. In the evenings, men lined up in front of the Grey Nuns' for a bowl of soup, or milled around in front of the Anglican Cathedral asking for bread. Men rode on the rods under the railroad cars, or sat in the bitter cold and wind on top of the boxcars, often 40 or 50 men on one car, shunting back and forth across the country in search of jobs that did not exist. Young men finished school with high marks and high hopes, to find they were wanted by no one, that there was nothing for them to do and nowhere for them to go.

And there was drought on the prairies. In 1938, Saskatchewan harvested a pitiful 36 million bushels of wheat which sold at the Lakehead for 68 cents a bushel in terms of the value of the dollar in 1977. Last year our great wheat-growing province produced 467 million bushels, which sold for \$4.62 a bushel.

Back in the thirties, a Saskatchewan girl, Anne Marriot, wrote a poem called *The wind our enemy*, which won the Governor General's award. A few lines of it may remind you of those days:

Wind

in a lonely laughterless shrill game
with broken wash-boiler, bucket without
a handle, Russian thistle, throwing up
sections of soil.

God, will it never rain again? What about
those clouds out west? No, that's just dust, as thick

[Senator Bird.]

and stifling now as winter underwear.

No rain, no crop, no feed, no faith, only
wind.

Those were dark days for many of us, but we and our institutions of government, our forms of government, survived. We came through.

Let me remind you that at that time there were no universal old age pensions, no Canada Pension Plan, no hospital or medical insurance, no nationwide public assistance, no unemployment insurance, no family allowances. Today, we have all these things to insulate us against suffering and disaster. Why, I ask, honourable senators, do Canadians complain so loudly?

As I meditate about the past my memory brings back to me a Christmas morning in Winnipeg during the Second World War. It was a bright, clear, cold day with hoar frost on the trees turning everything into a beautiful, mysterious fairy land. That was the day we heard that Hong Kong had fallen and the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Quebec Rifles had been taken prisoner. Can anything we know today match the grief that each day, each week, each month brought to us for six long years? But in those days we believed in ourselves. We had confidence in ourselves and our institutions, and we came through.

After Franklin Roosevelt first became president, he told the American people they had nothing to fear but fear itself. Today I think we have nothing to fear but ourselves. In Charlie Brown's famous phrase, "We have met the enemy and them is us." Our unwarranted lack of confidence in ourselves can, if we don't watch out, bring us to the edge of despair, and I remind you that despair is the most deadly and destructive of sins since it is the antithesis of hope.

The more I think about it the more I realize that Canadians are fortunate among people. It is 66 years since our country was invaded. Bombs have never reduced our cities to flaming rubble as happened to London and Coventry, Hamburg and Hiroshima. We and our children have never been raked by machine gun fire while fleeing from our homes in terror of the enemy, as happened at Guernica and on the roads of France. Few Canadians have died from starvation, as have millions of people in Africa or Asia. We have never been torn apart by a fratricidal civil war, as has our neighbour to the south. The war between the states turned many a brother against brother, father against son, and wife against husband. It left behind a pall of bitterness that still flares forth from time to time. The south has never forgiven Sherman, even if the north has forgotten him. I would remind honourable senators that Sherman was a general who led his soldiers with a scorched earth strategy across Georgia, from Chattanooga to the sea. May we never have to endure anything as terrible as that.

● (1450)

We are rich. Our standard of living puts us with the top seven richest nations in the world. We have a great cultural inheritance. Our official languages come to us from England and France, two of the most civilized countries of the West. Our society has been constantly refreshed and enriched by