

straight and tell you what it is. All our life as business people we have seen one man get another man in an iron grip financially, and cripple him. We have seen that all over the country, and our comment has simply been, "That is only business;" and the world rolls on. But when a certain class of the people get another class in their iron grip and won't let go, in my opinion there is going to be a calamity. Now, I am going to tell you in as few words as possible what I think the problem is.

The problem is the great burden of debts that hangs over the people of the world like a cloud. If the year of jubilee would come, our supposed problems would disappear like the dew before the noonday sun. What is the result? A few of our people are struggling to pay the interest on their debts, which they cannot do; consequently the debt is piling up, while too many of our people are eating, drinking and making merry as a result of their toil. This cannot go on indefinitely. What is the remedy? The interest on these debts must be reduced to a point where the debtor can pay the interest on his debts and some part of the principal or he will become a slave to his debts. Let me give you a concrete example. At the close of the war the German Empire was the greatest debtor in the world. All the years since her creditors have been endeavouring by all means in their power to collect those debts, and they have not got very far. They have now agreed to accept an amount within the ability of Germany to pay, this amount to be fixed by a commission, appointed for that purpose. If all debtors and creditors in the world would make their adjustments on that basis, I could see some hope ahead.

But what of ourselves? I do not mean the government, but every member of this House. We surely all have some responsibility. We have a heavy debt in this country considering the population, and we must remember that that is not the only burden our people are called upon to bear. Our provinces and municipalities also have heavy financial obligations. The cry of economy and retrenchment is in the air and I think it would be well for us to heed it. We in this corner of the House had little to do with the creation of our debt but we are very much interested in the matter and would like to see the debt reduced. The question is, how can it be accomplished? Business men would say, economise, cut down the overhead, take some of the advice you are giving so freely to our people; cut out the automobile, save gas, and come down a little nearer to the simple life.

[Mr. Hopkins.]

I notice on the order paper a resolution calling for the reduction of the sessional indemnity. I do not propose to argue that the present indemnity is too large, but I do say it would set the country a good example if we did reduce this indemnity, and I will have the greatest pleasure in supporting the resolution if it comes to a vote. It is generally conceded that we as a country are over-governed. A suggestion has recently been made that the membership of the Upper House should be reduced by about one-third. There is no doubt this could be done and the country would get as good legislation as it does today and a large amount of money would be saved. However the move to reduce the number of legislators is in the air, and I may say that a resolution to do this in Saskatchewan actually passed the legislature. We also hear it seriously advocated that the number of provinces in the East and West be reduced, and there is much to be said for this.

These are serious days, and the governments of the world are not facing the debt problem. These are not the days for the optimist or the pessimist. We want men of clear vision and stout hearts. If the creditors of the world will go on adding the unpaid interest to the debt and then demand their pound of flesh, we will only have two classes of people in the world. That great class that we are so proud of, which is commonly called the middle class, will have disappeared, and that would be a calamity. Government by party prevails in the world to-day; with all its faults we have never been able to evolve a better system. But I have often thought there might come a time when we could lay aside party consideration for a little and get around a common table for the country's sake. Has that time come? I think it has.

Mr. JOHN EVANS (Saskatoon): Mr. Speaker, the Acting Minister of Finance (Mr. Robb) in his budget speech this year made it very clear that there are certain basic industries on which the prosperity of all others depends. Agriculture is mentioned as the chief of these. One thing must be apparent to all, even to those who have during the last forty-five years become somewhat stupefied by privilege—that before the manufacturing class can realize any benefit from a system of protection there must be at least a larger class that cannot be protected and is unprotected in every way. This class in Canada is the agricultural class. Did the agricultural class have the same privilege by law to fix the price of its product as the manufacturers enjoy, there could be no benefit to either. I take it from the words of the budget speech