

Canada's Economic Condition

For that reason, I think I should say something of our economic position. With a sad look on their face as though they were about to ask you if the patient has any chance of recovery, I am all too frequently asked the question "When do you expect some recovery in Canada?" I only wish that those who ask that question would visit Canada and see for themselves what is happening there. True, we have had a levelling-out period, and we are not alone in that experience. Our unemployment figures seem high on a percentage basis compared with some other countries. But they are very misleading indeed. We have some very real problems of unemployment related to changing demand and changing methods of production. But it would also be well to bear in mind that we have a substantial measure of seasonal unemployment, which is of a very special nature and cannot be interpreted in terms of reduced production. For instance, all our fishermen on the huge inland lakes from one side of the country to the other, all the men serving on our inland ships, all the people working on the docks and transport installations serving those docks, many people working in the open in parts of the country where it is extremely cold, and others in special occupations of that kind, have been unemployed seasonally in the past, are now, and doubtless will be in the years to come. But from early spring until winter comes again, they have been, they are, and will be profitably employed.

To anyone who thinks that the Canadian economy is in an ailing condition may I simply give these significant facts. More people are employed today in Canada than ever before. The income of our workers is higher than it has ever been. The opportunities for advancement in the years ahead are greater than ever before. Part of the problem of unemployment in Canada today is the fact that we have one of the highest birthrates in the world, which in addition to the large immigration figures since the War, are simply an expression of confidence in Canada's future.

I have mentioned these things because I think it is so vitally important that neither of our countries should under-estimate the prospects for the future in either Canada or Britain. It is not so many years ago that serious writers were expressing the opinion that the strength of the British people had been sapped so greatly by the last War that Britain could no longer be expected in our generation to become a major power. The last ten years have seen the vitality and strength of this country grow by leaps and bounds until today it is one of the most prosperous areas in the whole world.