

Mr. Veniot), although I could follow it better than I have been able to do in the past. Honourable senators already know that our honourable friend from Gloucester (Hon. Mr. Veniot) is a distinguished son of a distinguished father, and we cannot but realize from his speech that he possesses a wide experience and an intimate knowledge of one of the major industries in which he and his people are so greatly concerned.

I should like to take this opportunity to compliment the honourable leader opposite (Hon. Mr. Haig) on his excellent address. We hold different views on certain matters, but in the main I feel that his speech was further evidence of his wide knowledge of public affairs.

I am heartily in agreement with his remarks about communism and the danger of the spread of its influence. But I am not so sure that I agree with his suggestion that the living standards of people have little to do with the spread of communism, and that one of the best methods of combating it is by way of propaganda and certain organized efforts. The history of the post-war years shows that with the improvement of economic conditions in Western Europe, the apparent onward sweep of communism was checked and was turned in the direction of those great areas in the East where living standards are deplorably low. I am convinced that would-be dictators, whether they be communistic or Nazi in their outlook, will not find in countries which enjoy freedom from hunger and want any fertile soil in which to sow the seed of their doctrine.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: If I were to attempt to separate from the rest of the world the areas which would be susceptible to the inroads of communism, I would point to those countries where men are starving and where the standard of living is low. These are the fields which are for Nazi or communist agitators.

I agree entirely with the leader opposite, and the mover of the Address, that it is desirable for people to attempt to lessen an apparent tendency—which perhaps was partly brought about by the war—to depend upon governments to assume many responsibilities which in former days rested on the shoulders of individuals. I believe, rightly or wrongly, that in the years which lie ahead governments in every country will have more to do with the general business activities of their people than they had in pre-war days. This is inevitable. Just where to draw the line is the question. It is certain that more active social security and social welfare plans will be put into effect. Practically all of the

western countries are already moving in this direction to a greater or lesser degree. I suppose the practical approach would be to move gradually and not too quickly.

Canada has already gone a long way in this direction, and in due course will go further. As honourable senators are aware, a joint committee of both houses of parliament is now being formed to consider the question of old age pensions with the view of devising a better means test. The question of old age pensions is a broad and important one, and provision for old age is becoming more and more a feature of our life. Everywhere around us public services are incorporating into their structures some scheme of retirement allowances. The question, I should think, is how to make desirable benefits available to almost everyone without upsetting our economic structure. I suppose the only people who are not concerned with a matter of this kind are those who have no intention of growing old. The matter is probably becoming more and more important as high income taxes and low interest rates on money require the setting aside of an increasingly large sum in order to provide even a modest retiring allowance. For my part I not only like the idea in the abstract that there should be some provision for old age, but I had no difficulty in reconciling myself to it when I was appointed to the Senate.

While on this subject I wish to make a suggestion, which can properly come from me, since I would not benefit if it were adopted. When in future this government or another government is considering some form of contributory old age pensions, care should be taken not to overlook one important group of people. I refer to members of the House of Commons who have given long service.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Canada has reason to be proud of the high standard of its public life. As I move about among people—civil servants, and employees of banks, industries and other organizations throughout this country—and learn of the many varieties of pension plans now in force, I cannot help wondering why members of the House of Commons who have given up their ordinary vocations and served their country well should not participate in some scheme of retiring allowances.

Hon. Mr. Howard: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. David: They should; no doubt about it.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: I am unable to think of any logical reason why they should not.