

What will the year 1934 bring forth? Mankind has begun it with a feeling of optimism and of manifest confidence, yet mingled with grave apprehension. The ruins left by the Great War still encumber, here and there, the surface of the earth, and momentous problems remain to be solved.

After the period of rejoicing which marked the end of the sanguinary nightmare, the peoples of the world began feverishly to search for a field of action. I have a very clear recollection of the enthusiasm with which the Imperial Conference of 1921 completed its labours. Production, work, peace efforts, such were the noble and reassuring appeals that resounded beneath the historic vaults of Westminster, to be broadcast throughout the world. That was practically the inception of the period of feverish activity, somewhat hesitant at first, but soon attaining a giddy pace. Work for all and mass production were to restore order, harmony and prosperity, banish for ever the causes of world friction, and usher in an era of new liberty for all peoples.

But a cloud still hung on the horizon, in that sky illumined with the fires of the new ideal. The source of the storms had not dried up. Full effect had not yet been given to that resolute and disinterested attempt to complete the restoration of the mass of ruins left us by that period which had just ended in bloodshed. The world had entered upon the path of unlimited production and the acquisition of wealth without having attempted to reorganize its governmental system or restore to political authority the prestige necessary for its effectiveness.

Our neighbours, favoured in more than one respect, the creditors of the universe, soon set themselves up as masters of the economic world, dictating the new law. Intensity of production, they urged, increases in salary, shortening of the hours of labour, facilities for the consumer, co-operation on a vast scale, must assure permanent prosperity. The first results were staggering, and the world was so convinced that it thought itself at the gates of the Promised Land. A famous economist, in a much heralded book, even asked, "Who will be the master, Europe or America?"

The inevitable happened to us: our resistance yielded to the constant fascination exercised upon us by our neighbours. Following their example, we embarked upon vast enterprises, breaking with our traditions of moderation and spending without counting the cost. Under the pretext of the rapid development of our natural resources we called upon our neighbours to aid us with their capital, and granted them large portions of our public domain, thus giving them the opportunity

which they had long sought of gaining a foothold on Canadian soil. And notwithstanding our endeavour to increase production, and our need to negotiate for new outlets in order to maintain it at the higher level, we placed ourselves in such a position that we were buying more from them than we could sell to them.

Our blind faith in the new gospel caused us to fall into the evil that wrought such havoc during the decade following the War: over-excitement and heedlessness. We did not stop to ask ourselves whether the magnitude of our enterprises was commensurate with the number and the real needs of our people, or whether they were not drawing imprudently upon our public and private capital and overburdening the future for an indefinite period. Such was our miscalculation in the economic field.

Have we been more farseeing from the strictly national point of view? One of the greatest statesmen has written that for the wise development of a country it is necessary to remind it unceasingly of the principles of its origin. I could not help feeling that in the throng, deeply impressed rather than curious, that surged outside and within these walls, following with interest the display of historic pomp and ceremony in the midst of which the sovereign authority came once more to entrust to the representatives of the people the duty of exercising their powers and giving effect to their wishes—I could not help feeling that in that throng vibrated the proud and lofty soul of Canada. I know well that we all, steadfast guardians of the Constitution and the rights of the people, love Canada in its distant past and in the present day; that we believe in its future greatness through its unity. But is it not necessary to remind the rising generations, as they move farther and farther from the sources of our national life, or to remind those who are eager for the return of great prosperity, that the fundamental idea of the Fathers of Confederation in guaranteeing to preserve intact the traditions of the two great races was to band the provinces of Canada together in an indissoluble whole, for the purpose of creating in the north of this continent an essentially Canadian mode of life? They desired, therefore, to endow Canada with a government system both flexible and firm, which should give full scope to all legitimate ambitions. To insure harmony between the races and contentment among the people was, they believed, to insure at the same time national unity and to avert the American peril.

Can we give to national unity its full meaning in the midst of the conflict of interests and tendencies? Its apparent fragility should be the strongest incentive of our actions.