

The year was 1932 and the Canadian West was one of the hardest hit areas in the worldwide economic crisis. Two-thirds of Saskatchewan families received relief after the Dust Bowl left prairie farmers with parched, dead fields.

In the midst of the catastrophic times, labour and socialist groups as well as political activists gathered in a Calgary legion hall on July 31, 1932 and formed the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation.

- Source: CBC History, *Hard Times*, "Striking Back": <http://history.cbc.ca/history/?MIval=Section.html&series_id=1&episode_id=13&chapter_id=3&lang=E>

Did you know?



People such as J.S. Woodsworth were concerned about inequality and poverty in Canada. They believed that the government's main responsibility was to provide for the well-being of the people, and that the people as a whole, not private business, should be the owners of the country's resources and industries.

These reformers demanded a social security net—a "safety net"—to help people in difficult times, and to provide more equality to citizens (e.g., health care, employment, insurance, pensions, welfare or relief programs, et cetera).

I claim that we have come to a period in the history of our country when we must decide once and for all which shall prevail, profits or human welfare.

I should not like to suggest how many thousands of dollars I have cost Canada in having the police trail me around. I want to make that very clear: possibly I was worth watching.

- J.S. Woodsworth, one of the original leaders of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, as cited in House of Commons Debates, 1922

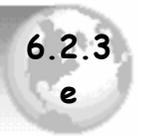
...Presently there came along one little mouse who had an idea. My friends, watch out for the little fellow with an idea. And he said to the other mice, "Look fellows, why do we keep on electing a government made up of cats? Why don't we elect a government made up of mice?" "Oh," they said, "he's a Bolshevik. Lock him up!" So they put him in jail.

But I want to remind you: that you can lock up a mouse or a man but you can't lock up an idea.



- Speech by Tommy Douglas (1944), as cited in Canadian Museum of Civilization, Labour History, The Dark Years: <<http://www.civilization.ca/hist/labour/labv29e.html>>

Demanding Social Change



Use the following note-taking frame to record information about action for social change during the Depression.

Topic	Details (who-what-when-where-why)
Citizen letters to Prime Minister Bennett	
Onward to Ottawa Trek and the Regina Riot	
The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation	
J.S. Woodsworth	
Tommy Douglas	