

# SAYOUT

Fall, 2013

*Ideas, Facts, and Opinions for Today*

## Where are we now?

Five years ago, in the fall of 2008, the world experienced a severe financial shock. Our top leaders called out to each other urgently for ideas and actions to help. In their frenzy they came up with schemes for rescue, ramming massive spending measures through various legislatures around the world. The system had to be saved!

Where are we now?

Countries around the world are experiencing high levels of unemployment, productivity is shaky, and people lack the means to buy enough of what we can produce. Our economies are in a depressed state, although the word “depression” is carefully avoided.

At the same time, transnational corporations are sitting on enormous reserves of cash, our banks are reporting record profits, and offshore banking facilities are bursting at the seams with money, often dirty money.

What’s going on?

Ordinary people must demand answers. And they must stop being satisfied with whatever pabulum their official leaders and “betters” choose to dispense.

History shows us that people can force changes, even in dire circumstances. But they need the knowledge and will to do so. And they need courage.

We’re only helpless if we think we’re helpless. Once we realize our own strength and use that strength, things can change—for the better. Let’s build our strength and work towards change, real change.

## What’s a Nice Number Doing in a Place Like This?

Numbers can make things seem more believable. They don’t even have to be correct to give the appearance of accuracy and certainty.

Quick, pick a number, any number!

When people throw numbers at you, take care. Those numbers could be spread before you like so much fool’s gold. Will you be fooled?

### *A failure to regulate*

*“The financial crisis that started as a credit crunch in 2007 and exploded dramatically in 2008 was not caused primarily by a failure of global regulation; it was caused by a global failure of regulation. That is, national regulators and national policymakers had lots of tools to stop fantasy financial assets from being created, given ludicrously unrealistic prices, and sold on. In a whole string of countries, they chose not to use them.”*

*Alan Beatty,  
False Economy*



**It’s an emergency,  
someone crashed the  
economy!**

## Stimulating for whom?

After the Great Recession came about in 2008, we heard much about the question of stimulating the economy. This was said to be a Keynesian solution.

But what followed?

Most of what happened came under the heading of “enhancing liquidity”. That is, making sure banks and other financial institutions had enough money to carry on with what they were doing.

In effect, the financial institutions were rewarded handsomely with public money for crashing the economy.

Hundreds of millions of dollars flowed, most of it from government coffers, to shore up the existing financial system, the very same system that had brought about the crash of ‘08.

Bad loans, bad investments, who cared? Governments would use their resources to salve the corporate spirits and all would rejoice.

The “stimulation” part involved the banks working to extend more loans to ordinary Canadians, so increasing their personal indebtedness.

Indebtedness for the masses!

So stimulating!

Don’t worry, though, plenty of money was left over for generous pay raises and bonuses for top executives—hundreds of millions actually.

Today our economy is working much the same as it did before 2008, with exactly the same financial risks. But unemployment remains stubbornly high, and government debt has increased massively. Don’t you feel stimulated?

## 'Affluenza' for All?

Every day we're bombarded by advertising urging us to buy this, that, or the other thing. All the noise about buying stuff, can bring on a bad case of affluenza.

When you suffer from affluenza, you may start to ask: *Do I really need all this stuff? Is it so important for me to keep up with what my friends are buying? Is there more to life than buy, buy, buy? Do I need to load myself down with ever more debt?*

When you realize that affluenza may have infected you, it's possible for you to take corrective action.

Focus on your *needs* as opposed to your *wants*. A lot of money and a lot of brainpower goes into urging you to buy. The smartest of psychological techniques may end up seducing you.

Most of the time you don't really *need* to buy. In fact, you may be left wondering at times why you bought what you did buy.

The next time you're tempted to buy something, pause and ask yourself, "*Do I really need this?*" Be careful and thoughtful in your answer. It's surprising what you can actually do without.

### Sayout

Sayout gives voice to those concerned about where we are and where we're headed. Here we can talk about issues affecting us right now—in Canada and around the world.

Agree or disagree, but think. What is really happening, and what do we need to do? Ask questions of those in power, demand action where it's needed, and don't be misled by saccharine promises or golden phrases meant to soothe, but nothing more..

E-versions of this newsletter are available for free. You just have to ask. No selling, no hassles!

Contact Robyn Peterson at:

robyn\_writewell@yahoo.ca



### A lot of stuff is out there to tempt us

#### *Depression priorities*

*"A balanced budget and a sound dollar — those were R.B. Bennett's priorities."*

Pierre Berton

*The Great Depression 1929-1939*

### What Do We Know?

Today "people in the know" routinely dismiss any notion that we might actually be experiencing a depression. After all, we're not experiencing successive quarters of negative growth in our GDP!

Back in the 1930s they didn't use the same definition as we use today for declaring a recession or, worse, a depression. Nor did people count unemployment in those years in the same way we do now. Statistical measures have changed and so have our meanings and interpretations of different economic and social events.

A major reason why we have an unrecognized depression going on is that various social measures such as unemployment (now employment) insurance and better levels of old age security were put in place as a result of the Great Depression. Ordinary people benefit from those measures to this day.

Our situation is serious, and we don't benefit from high-level efforts to downplay or dismiss what is really happening.

### Stand Up and Ask

Many public meetings give you a chance to ask questions of a speaker or panel.

If you've got something you want to ask, by all means step up and ask. Questions from audience members can enliven any meeting.

Don't however, use your chance to ask a question to make a speech instead. The audience came to hear the listed presenters, not you.

To prepare yourself, write out your question in advance. A small index card is useful for this. Use dark ink in your writing to help you see in low lighting.

When you ask your question, speak distinctly and with sufficient volume that the audience can hear. If you have a microphone, hold it close enough to your mouth for the sound system to pick you up (around 10 centimetres).

Questions from audience members in a meeting are good. If you're the one who asks, do your best to make your question clear, brief, to the point, and audible. That allows everyone to benefit.

#### *Ending the Predator State*

*"The end of the Predator State will come only when the more reasonable and more progressive part of the business community insists on it and is willing to make common cause with unions, consumers, environmentalists, and other mobilized social groups to bring the predators to heel."*

James Galbraith  
*The Predator State*

### What's That?

No matter who the politician is, always think about what they're really saying and why. What's in it for them? Political utterings are usually not what they seem at first.