05/11/2018 - Armistice Day: Centenary

My Lords, it is a great privilege to play a part in a debate of this kind and I am very grateful for the opportunity.

As it happens, the first speech, by the Minister, and the last, by the noble Lord, Lord Wallace, have both referenced the participation by the German President in our commemorative events this weekend. That emboldens me to begin by quoting from a German philosopher, Leibniz, who once said that the present is suffused with the past and charged with the future. There is, then, no time like the present, this centenary moment, to take stock of what has gone before while positioning ourselves for what is to come.

This debate has been a perfect vehicle for exploring this dynamic, and we can only thank all who have contributed for their evocative, personal and challenging remarks. From this vantage point, we in this Parliament, and the nation at large, must bring the past alive again, not for its own sake but in order to recommit ourselves to the future—a note that has been struck again and again during this debate.

A kaleidoscopic array of experiences has flooded my mind, as it has the minds of us all, and shown us just how connected we all are to the events of 1914-18. Let me run down a short list of such memories that spring from my own mind, not in the hope of being exhaustive but in an attempt to illustrate the wide

spectrum of our national and international life that was drawn into this conflict 100 years ago.

The Sunday school room in Burry Port where I used to play and learn as a boy was a simple, lean-to, wooden affair—not Lincoln Cathedral. A certificate on the wall carried the name of Bert Owen. Many years later, I discovered that he had survived the horrendous battle for Mametz Wood in 1915 but died two years later at the battle of Messines. A photograph on our kitchen wall at home shows Private Robert Edward Rhodes with his simple medals, from Staffordshire. He would have been my wife's great-uncle. He died aged 21 in Flanders fields. These were two lads from small towns, just like millions of others, and many references have been made to just such people. "Short days" they,

"lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,

Loved and were loved".

My student holiday job was as a male nurse in St David's mental hospital in Carmarthen. I shaved and bathed a poor man who had been gassed and shell-shocked 40 years previously before being committed to that institution where, as far as I know, he spent the remainder of his days. I remember the geriatric ward of a local hospital at the very beginning of my life as a Methodist minister. The mere sight of a young man wearing a clerical collar was enough to set off a barrage of abuse aimed directly at me—there was no place for God in the minds

of so many of those who endured the trenches. Those were two hospitals where veterans were victims, just like millions of others, who had heard,

"The shrill demented choirs of wailing shells",

but were now left to deal with their ghosts and their unresolved anger, or else just kept out of sight because their cases were too hard for us to contemplate.

Another of my holiday jobs was to help demolish what had been a national explosives factory in Pembrey. Millions of shells and tons of explosives were manufactured there. The factory poured its toxic chemicals into the sea where I and my pals used to swim and cavort. Its workforce during the Great War was largely made up of women—their yellowing skin and hair making it only too obvious where they worked.

Margaret Broadley was deputy matron of the London Hospital. She lived out her life as a spinster, sublimating the deep energies of the love she once had for her sweetheart through her chosen vocation of nursing. She never forgot, as she told me often enough, his kisses and caresses. Those were women, like millions of others, working tirelessly behind the scenes, so many of them widowed before they were wed.

I am wearing a khadi poppy, of which much mention has been made. Let it stand this evening, with permission, for Indians, Africans and Caribbean soldiers, Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians.

Let us remember that not only soldiers served from our imperial regions. I can picture the endless supply lines that supported the military effort. Recently, I visited Kenya and met a number of people from a sprawling township on the edge of Nairobi known to this day as Kariokor—the Carrier Corps. The place name survives in its strange and mutilated form.

"Gathered like pearls in their alien graves",

lay what the poet Sarojini Naidu called the "Gift of India", and she would surely have added those of so many other places from around the Empire too. The reading of that poem was one of the highlights of our Parliament Choir's commemorative performance of Mozart's Mass in C minor just last week.

I might also mention a cantata, a composition of Brian Hughes performed in Cardiff by the National Youth Choir of Wales, accompanied by the National Youth Orchestra of Wales, called "Sorrows of the Somme". Indeed, as has been mentioned often, the wide cultural response to the safeguarding of the memories of that awful time have been very striking.

I come towards the end of my list of memories. I remember the memorial I dedicated in the National Memorial Arboretum in my capacity as president of the Boys Brigade. We remembered 11 members of our movement who had been awarded the Victoria Cross for their courage and leadership during the Great War. I remember that the names of hundreds of young soldiers are written in magnificent copper-plate on a vast, framed roll of honour in the parish of Saint

John, in Croydon, where I now live—or chiselled on large marble slabs on the chapel wall at Trinity College, Cambridge. They remind us of all those who paid the supreme price on the battle-fields, and they remind us of the classlessness of those from across the social spectrum who gave what was their today so that we might enjoy what would become our tomorrow.

"At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them"—

the words of Lawrence Binyon, will ring out across the land over the next few days. I feel a need to hold these words up for greater scrutiny, especially the word "remember", and I hope noble Lords will forgive me for this. The verb "to remember" is one of the English language's precious jewels. It has a distinctive meaning which is often lost in the way we employ it. I suspect we would do well to pronounce it differently: to "re-member", with a hyphen in it, rather than simply "remember". We "re-member" that which has been "dis-membered". Memory serves a greater purpose than merely recapturing something that is in danger of passing out of our minds. "Re-membering" is about rebuilding a fragmented world, putting flesh on the ideals we have for our world. How better to honour the memory of those who paid such a price for our freedom?

What followed the First World War, far from "re-membering" a dismembered social order, too often simply added to its fragmentation. It concerned itself with

punishment and revenge rather than reconstruction. The Second World War became an inevitable consequence of the failure to win the peace.

As the noble Lord, Lord Wallace, has said, it was in the years following the disintegration caused by the Second World War that the world seemed at last to have come to its senses. The founding of the United Nations and its various agencies, the Bretton Woods agreement, the Marshall Plan, the European Union and NATO were all aimed at "re-membering" a dismembered world. We set our target—let us not forget this—on: saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war; reaffirming faith in fundamental human rights; establishing and maintaining the rule of law; promoting social progress. The object of our emphatic intention to honour the memory of those who served their King and country in that godforsaken war surely has to be to build a world worthy of their sacrifice.

Abraham Lincoln saw it that way—and only too clearly—when he stood at the battle-field of Gettysburg during his nation's Civil War:

"The world … can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated … to the great task remaining before us … that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion … that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain … that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of

freedom … and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth".

Gosh, those words ring true now. Lincoln! Thou shouldst be living at this hour: the world hath need of thee.

I am grateful for the privilege of adding my voice to those who have contributed to this debate, and of giving thanks for the Armistice which brought the First World War to its end. The challenge it leaves us with is clear enough. We must work hard for the "re-membering" of our dismembered world. We will truly honour the memory of those who have gone before when we put our best efforts into building a world fit for those who have yet to be born. Remembering is a forward-looking activity.

06/11/2018 - Tax Collection and Management (Wales) Act 2016 and the Land Transaction Tax and Anti-Avoidance of Devolved Taxes

My Lords, every point I might have wanted to make has been made either by the Minster or by those who have spoken. I will be interested to hear the Minister's answer to the question from the noble Lord, Lord Wigley, about whether the Assembly has been fully consulted and whether it is the full opinion of the Assembly to move down this line. He seemed to suggest that there had