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JAS. J. SALMOND
Managing Director

FRED. W. FIELD
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Must Prepare For Period to Follow War

CANADA Has Much to do in Task Second Only in Importance to Winning the War—Necessity for the Appointment of a Non-Political Board to Consider Post-bellum Problems and Their Relation to One Another.

By PROFESSOR R. M. MacIVER, M.A., University of Toronto.

THE urgent necessity for national preparation to meet post-bellum conditions has recently been impressed upon the people by more than one member of the federal government. It seems, however, of little use to expect that individuals, or even associations standing for particular interests, can envisage the problem as a whole, or offer anything more than particular and perhaps conflicting suggestions. It is felt that this work demands the most thorough-going and comprehensive investigation, and that this investigation cannot be properly carried through except under the authority of the central government. It is also felt that existing organizations are not constituted to undertake this work, and that unless immediate action is taken to this end, the measures which the reconstruction period will certainly require cannot be adequately prepared.

It is obvious that the present industrial activity of the country rests upon an artificial foundation which the ending of the war will automatically remove. At least half a million workers are engaged on work for which the war is directly or indirectly responsible, and most of these will at its end be suddenly bereft of their present employment, while much of the machinery upon which they have been employed will be rendered wholly or partly useless. Three or four hundred thousand soldiers will be returning to their normal occupations during the period of dislocation thus brought about. If industry and agriculture are unable to receive them, these must be supported by the State until their reabsorption is possible, and when not only the actual money cost of this unproductive maintenance but also the loss of skill, the growing unfitness for ordinary economic life, and the general danger of social degeneration through a life of semi-idle and semi-charitable dependance are reckoned, the urgency of the problem is surely manifest.

Again, the large export trade to which Canada owes her favorable trade balance depends mainly upon war products, and to maintain her position new trade outlets, with a consequent redirection of labor, must be sought. Here the problem is not so much one of capacity for production as of a far-reaching effective scheme for marketing the production of which Canadian manufacturing plants are already capable, a scheme which will include not only the large manufacturers but also the great number of small manufacturers who cannot afford to develop out-

side markets for themselves, a scheme also which will facilitate domestic no less than foreign trade. It is obvious that the maintenance, not to speak of the extension, of the present productive capacity of the country depends upon the feasibility of an improved organized system of marketing.

Again, the existing scales of wages and prices, being due to entirely abnormal conditions, will be subject to sudden revisions as the return to normal conditions of competition and production takes place. This will certainly involve sharp conflicts of interests, resulting in further industrial dislocation and ex parte appeals for government intervention—unless some special organization (say, in the form of a wage and arbitration board of a non-political character can be devised. It should also be remembered that the war broke in upon a period of acute industrial depression, and that while it has acted as an artificial stimulant and dispelled it for the time being it did not remove its causes and will not prevent the natural reaction. Further, along with the need for immediate economic readjustment there will arise a great necessity for wider social readjustment as the war habits and outlook of the whole people change to peace habits and outlook, and social demands and oppositions which have been dormant during the war become more clamant. In view of the certain confusion and possible disaster which will ensue unless adequate preparation be made, the plea that all the energies of the country must be devoted to the war cannot hold as an excuse for unpreparedness, and in fact the United Kingdom and other countries which are even more essentially engrossed in the war than Canada have recognized the necessity to prepare and formulate schemes of reconstruction in advance of any signs of peace. There exists to-day a greater need for constructive thought, for systematic and comprehensive preparation, than ever before in the history of the country.

It is therefore suggested as an urgent necessity that a small board of qualified persons, able and willing to devote their whole time and energy for six months or a year or longer to the investigation of the reconstruction problem, be appointed at once. Its central task would be the problem of the readjustment of employment and the reabsorption of those whom the end of the war will throw out of employment. The solution of this problem demands, however, the unified consideration of a great many