

## Editorial

### PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE.

Sir George Foster, addressing the Toronto board of trade recently, showed, as minister of trade and commerce, a keen appreciation of the national and international trade position as it is likely to appear after the war. He predicted that unless we now plan and act for the period to follow the war, we shall pay a heavy penalty for commercial unpreparedness. He gave a clear outline of the position and the first question which must have arisen in the minds of his audience, was "What is Canada doing in this connection?"

Sir George answered this question only to an extent which would seem to show that the department of trade is hampered by politics, by lack of sufficient appropriations for the work of the department, by insufficient assistance or by other factors. The department has the proper conception of the situation but has it enough machinery for its materialization? Here we are, after nearly two years of war, listening to the first proposal of its character that an advisory council of Canada's financial, industrial, commercial and transportation leaders should be appointed to co-operate with the department of trade at Ottawa. It is an excellent suggestion and one which has constantly been made in these columns. It comes, with official backing, a year behind time, but it is a good omen. Great Britain not only appointed such a committee long ago, but the committee has met and presented a report of considerable value.

Those who heard Sir George Foster's speech, know that he is working on right lines, but is the government as a whole and the country at large giving the proper support to what is at present one of the most important departments of state, its commerce department? We think they are not.

### AN ENGINEERING COUNCIL.

Mr. C. H. Rust, who was for many years city engineer of Toronto, and who has been city engineer of Victoria, B.C., for the past few years, is probably one of Canada's best-known engineers, and is a man of wide experience. It must be a great comfort to Mr. Rust, however, to have so many valued engineering assistants in the city council of Victoria this year.

Despite Mr. Rust's strong objections, the council insisted recently in calling for tenders for untreated wood paving blocks. Mr. Rust advised them that they were taking a retrograde step, not conducive to the best interests of the city, explaining that the lifetime of the treated wood block is from 50 per cent. to 75 per cent. longer than that of untreated block, and that, moreover, the treatment tends to make the block waterproof.

Mr. Rust said that the first cost of the block is not the only matter to be considered, and told of the advantages of the treated block which are so generally recognized by all engineers. Three of the aldermen, however, had ideas of their own about block paving work. One of them wished to lay a tar base, then to place the untreated block against the rails in a diagonal position, and then to cover the whole over with tar. Another

alderman favored the untreated block, because he said that it would keep the moisture from sinking to the tar cushion underneath, where it would linger and perhaps disintegrate the block. The third alderman said he favored treatment in "crude oil instead of in tar."

However, we are taking a daily newspaper report as our authority concerning these suggestions of the aldermen, and perhaps we may be doing them an injustice, as daily newspaper reports on technical matters are not always absolutely correct. But if this report was correct, City Engineer Rust must certainly greatly appreciate the council's assistance. Having in their employ a man of the ability of Mr. Rust, it seems to us that the Victoria council would do well to leave purely technical matters of this sort entirely in Mr. Rust's hands.

### ESCHER-WYSS FIRM INVESTIGATED.

For more than a year there has been considerable doubt as to whether or not the firm of Escher-Wyss & Co., of Zurich, Switzerland, is a German concern.

Zurich is near the German border, the firm name sounds Teutonic, the company admittedly owned a branch factory in Wurttemberg, and their managing engineer in Canada was a German subject.

Superficially the combination looked suspicious. In fact it looked so suspicious to the British War Office that many months ago the firm was put on the enemy trader list. This action brought forth strong protest from the Swiss Consul-General at London, but nothing was done pending the result of a thorough investigation into the firm's affairs by representatives of the British Government.

The directors of the firm requested full examination. They claimed that they were strictly neutral; that about as many Englishmen and Frenchmen worked at their shops as did Germans; that their stock was held in Belgium, France, England and Switzerland, as well as in Germany; that stock-control was in Switzerland and not in Germany; that the shares held by Swiss banks were not held in trust for the Allgemeine firm, as had been alleged; that the German government had taken over their Wurttemberg factory, and that they no longer had control over it; that their firm had made no munitions of war; and that since the war they had sold more goods to the countries of the Allies than they had to Germany or Austria.

These claims were fully investigated, and as a result the Canadian customs commissioner has been officially informed by London that the name of the company has been entirely removed from the Black List and that the Imperial Government is satisfied that the firm is genuinely Swiss.

*The Canadian Engineer* is very pleased to hear that this firm, which has done much good hydraulic and steam turbine work throughout Canada, is not an enemy trader. It may appear to them that they have not been justly treated in this country during the past year, but they must surely recognize that no part of the British Empire can afford to run the slightest risk of English money finding its way to Germany.