

# CO-ORDINATING RECONSTRUCTION DEPARTMENTS

## TO BRIDGE CHASM FOR SOLDIER BETWEEN WAR AND HIS PEACEFUL OCCUPATION

*Hon. Arthur Meighen, in Address at Winnipeg Speaks of Canada's Duty to Her Returned Fighting Man and what Schemes are Operating to Repatriate Him.*

[Continued from page 1.]

Club. But suffer me a word first that I would really like to say. My personal intentions are not of great consequence, but I don't want to be misunderstood. I believed in Union Government a year ago. I believe in it to-day. It was called into being by the exigencies of a great crisis, by strong broad currents of public thought, flowing from great events. It was the conception initially of the people of this country, not of any group of men, and what the overwhelming will of this nation joined together there has been no cause that I have seen to put assunder. Granted faithful co-operation within the Cabinet and a fair attitude without, it means I think the best results to Canada. Believing that, my duty is unsparing service as a Minister of that Government, whole hearted loyalty to its every member, and continued fidelity to its chief, whom I have learned through so many years to honour. That duty I intend to discharge.

### CANADA'S HUMAN EFFORT.

"War works destruction and where there has been destruction there must be reconstruction. In Canada there has not been destruction everywhere. There has for example been heavy expenditures of money, but with expenditure there has been accretion and even accumulation. As a Dominion we have found ourselves for the first time selling beyond our purchases, producing in the aggregate beyond the measure of our needs, and compared with every other nation except one, gaining in industrial position and in financial resource. We have a huge federal debt but to a large degree we are our own creditors. All this has been done by the enthusiastic pulling together of the people of this country. There has as a consequence been no destruction in industry or finance. While we must have re-adjustment in these spheres—new markets found for our products—new labour for our demobilized workers, there is nothing to which reconstruction properly understood can be applied.

"The case is different though when we come to the human elements. Close to half a million men—some 83,000 of them raised by the military draft which to the honour of this country is reported to maintain the struggle in its fiercest and darkest hours—close to 500,000 men, more than half the young men of this country and about one quarter of its adult males, have become soldiers and have undergone in varying degrees the ordeal of war. Some 55,000 are dead, the support or homes destroyed. About 155,799 more are maimed and of those remaining apparently unharmed, there will be few whose fitness for the pursuits of civil life is not in some degree impaired. That is real destruction. These are the men who saved the good name of our country and gave it a new birth, whose courage and bearing in battle is a legacy to enrich and renew this nation's life. Because of what they did we can hold up our heads to-day. The responsibility of repairing for them the destruction of these years is right upon us, of reconstructing the home and homestead, the work and workshops of the soldier after the wreck of war. It is of that reconstruction I intend to speak.

### MUST RE-ESTABLISH SOLDIER.

"All admit the responsibility, but it is concrete acts that count. We must do everything a grateful nation can do to re-establish the soldier as a civilian, to bridge for him the chasm between war

and work, and to cancel by the aid of the state the handicap he encounters by reason of his service and his sacrifice.

"I do not agree with those who think this task an easy one. The experience of past great wars argues the other way. The lot of the survivors of the Napoleonic wars was pitiful, and it is said that 75 per cent of the veterans of the Crimea died in workhouses. The American Civil War, though it was followed by the peopling of a continent and by an almost indiscriminate distribution of pensions, brought hardship and hazard, industrial inefficiency to a great mass of its veterans. The overstocking of the labour market that followed those wars accounts only in small part for this phenomenon. The soldiers suffered worse than others, and their distress was not relieved when better employment conditions returned. The fact is that long-continued military discipline, especially as a private, tends to reduce civilian efficiency. New ideas are not in demand—the O.C. does the thinking, initiative is discouraged, the staff takes care of that. The sense of responsibility to provide for one's self and one's dependents, the motive which sends nine men out of ten to work and keeps them at work, that sense falls into dormancy; the responsibility is shouldered on the state, and the man need no longer take thought for the morrow, what he shall eat, what he shall drink, or where withal he shall be clothed. For two, three, or four years he has been taught to kill, to destroy, not to help and to construct—the normal activities of his being having been suppressed. The tendency therefore is that, unless the man is of exceptionally strong and resolute character, those normal activities so suppressed will become benumbed and his fitness for the industrial struggle reduced.

"Then there is the shock, the enervation of war. All these causes unite to fix a handicap on the soldier. They tend to a destruction of efficiency that calls for reconstruction.

"This Dominion has set its hand, its people and its Government have set their hands, to meet this situation. We are going to try and reverse the process that has set in after the great wars of the past; we are going to see that there is no backwash of human wreckage from this war, none but the smallest, the inescapable minimum, if the Government of this country and the co-operation of our people can prevent it. We purpose to treat the returned soldier not as one group, but man by man, to study his necessities and to meet them, to take him by the hand and to help him as long as he shows a will to help himself, and our work to this great end is already well under way. I am here to tell you what we are doing, what our plans and organization are, and when I have done that to invite and appeal to every good citizen to fit into that organization somewhere and do his part, to get the right spirit and keep it so that our Dominion of Canada can end this job as she began it and finish in honour the whole task of war.

### HISTORY OF REPATRIATION.

"I shall describe the work, department by department.

"In 1915 the Government of that day established what was known as the Military Hospitals Commission, under the chairmanship of Sir James Loughheed. To that Commission was entrusted the responsibility of ministering to the needs of invalided men after they ceased to be soldiers. The Militia Department then, as now, took care of

every soldier until his discharge, and had their own hospitals for the afflicted men. It was thought well to provide an organization that would enable the Militia Department to take care of men who were in need of something like permanent treatment, who were not likely to return to active service, and who should be trained during treatment for civilian rather than military pursuits. The Military Hospitals Commission undertook this work. It evolved a system of medical services, including the provision and maintenance of sanatoria, hospitals and convalescent homes. A hundred and fifty institutions are administered throughout Canada under its medical services branch, which branch itself is presided over by a returned soldier. The returned soldier who requires treatment gets that treatment free. He gets also pay and allowances on the military scale for himself and dependents. If after leaving an institution he finds it necessary to return, he can do so and his pay and allowances revive. This free medical service for the afflicted of the war will continue as long as the last veteran lives.

"The Military Hospitals Commission, now known as the Invalided Soldiers Commission, includes also a surgical appliance branch. This branch supplies orthopaedic boots and artificial limbs for all amputation cases. These are made in their own factory and they believe them the best in the world. At convenient points throughout Canada, they maintain depots, where the soldier from time to time can come, have his limb examined, repaired and if necessary renewed, and this of course he is entitled to as long as he lives. These depots are all in charge of disabled veterans who themselves are wearing artificial limbs.

### VOCATIONAL TRAINING.

"In the early months of the Commission's activities, they commenced a system of vocational training and re-education by which both in the hospitals of the Militia Department and in their own, they provide the man who has been so disabled in service as to be unfit to continue in the former occupation, a training for another calling, and the Government of Canada through this Commission assumes the responsibility of qualifying every man so disabled, who will try to qualify for some useful and self-supporting occupation. If his affliction is such that he cannot be so trained, then the country provides him with a home. Representatives of the Commission, all of them returned soldiers themselves, are in every hospital interviewing the returned invalided men, ascertaining their past occupations, studying their disabilities and their tastes, and in all cases where a new pursuit must be chosen, the man to be trained is brought before a Disabled Soldiers Training Board, composed of experts, for consultation as to what line of work he shall be trained to follow. The teaching is done chiefly in large industrial concerns, many of whom have joined in and allowed the use of their establishments for the purpose. Some of the work is done in technical schools and in the Engineering Department of Universities. New institutions have been specially equipped to supplement the system, but experience so far proves that the chief agency for training is the factory and the actual business concern. The results are gratifying. More than 7,000 men have already been approved for specific lines of work and more than 2,000 have graduated in training courses and been placed in civil employment. Seventy per cent of all who have taken the course are successfully engaged in the occupations for which they have been trained, and less than 5 per cent have turned out to be failures.

### NEW INTEREST IN LIFE.

"The value of vocational exercise is therapeutic as well as commercial. It gives the man a new interest in life, takes his mind off his ills, adds to his self-reliance, restores his sense of independence and hastens his recovery. Thousands are engaged in all kinds of pursuits mainly with this object in view,—in wood carving, motor mechanics, in poultry culture, in basket making and the like, as well as along general lines of education. So successful has been the

whole enterprise of handling invalided men, right from its inception almost four years ago, that Canada stands to-day in this respect, the pioneer of the belligerent nations. Sir Rider Haggard in 1916 after examining the methods of the allied countries, reported that the best of all was to be found in this Dominion. Commissioners from the United States later on visited Canada to investigate our system with the result that the whole scheme and organization of the great republic follows step by step the pattern set by Canada. Australia has done the same. In such fashion has the Dominion addressed itself to one very difficult branch of the rehabilitation problem—the re-equipping of the disabled men—and though after all efforts there will remain isolated cases of hardship, it is a responsibility that is being creditably discharged. It is unfortunate that we can very seldom agree in our own day as to the merits of great public undertakings, but how often it is true that after time has rolled on and the smoke of misrepresentation has lifted we can look back across the years over the ashes of past conflicts and see big things well done, fine edifices of achievement standing out against the sky. The constitutional structure of confederation, the railroad conquest of this western Empire, the development of the organization and policy by which our systems of transport are controlled, these are some of the landmarks in the progress of British America. I can say these things without seeming to invite favour to myself because in this work I have had no departmental or initiatory connection whatever. The day will come when the children of this generation, the heirs of the labour and suffering of these troubled years, will recognize in the war effort of Canada, an accomplishment overshadowing in splendour and credit all the performances of her history, and among the proudest memories of that great endeavour will be the work of this Commission on behalf of invalided men.

### WHAT PENSIONS ARE FOR.

"Our pensions are intended to compensate the soldier for loss of efficiency and earning power in the general labour market caused by his disability. No distinction is made on account of previous occupation or income. The totally disabled private soldier receives now \$600 per year, with \$96 additional for each minor child. The lieutenant receives \$900 and a per child allowance of \$96. The captain \$1,000 and \$96. The higher officers receive larger figures fixed by the Militia Act under which they enlisted, it being felt that these could not in justice be altered. It is my opinion that if the whole war problem had to be faced anew there would be no distinction in pensions between officers and men. If an injured man can increase his earning power by vocational training or otherwise, and many of them bring it to a level as high or higher than before the war, his pension is not reduced. The higher remuneration is a premium held out to stimulate him in the training for greater usefulness in life. Of all the maxims of this world, there is none better than this, that the best help is given any man, soldier or civilian, by helping him to help himself. My experience is that no class of people realize the commanding force of that truth as the veterans themselves. Some immediate direct assistance is necessary—more may be necessary—but the fundamental task of civil re-establishment is the training to independence, the development of the will and power to take care of self, on which all sound social organization rests.

"Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin as self-neglecting."

### EXPLAINS WAR GRATUITIES.

"The soldier with no disability is also entitled to attention. They get a war service gratuity now fixed at six months' pay for men of three years' service, five months for men of two years' service, four months for men of one year's service, and three months for others, provided any part of the service was overseas. If no part of the service was overseas, the allowances are three, two, and one month for three, two, and one year's service. A minimum of \$70

[Continued on page 3.]