

Immigration After the War

(Written for the Journal of Commerce by Prof. W. W. SWANSON.)

The chief work of the moment is the successful prosecution of the war, but that should not preclude the Canadian people from perfecting the economic organization of the country to meet the new problems that peace must bring. Among these problems the most important is that of immigration. It is a mere platitude to say that Canada's prosperity depends, ultimately and fundamentally, upon agriculture; but it is a platitude that must bear repetition. At the outbreak of war Canada's economic fabric, like that of all other nations whether within the war zone or without, was badly shaken; but since that time abundant crops and enormous war orders have brought about a prosperity which, if fictitious is none the less real. In days gone by our forefathers prayed for "a bloody war and a good harvest." The statistics of the Labor Department show that our farmers are prospering as never before; and, instead of unemployment which was so much dreaded a year ago, there is not enough labor to meet the demand. If our armies are raised to 500,000 men there will be a serious scarcity of labor for manufacturing and agriculture. At the same time, the coming year should be a golden era for labor. Nevertheless, we are bound to face the fact that present conditions are artificial and cannot last. While carrying on the war with all possible vigor it behooves us, therefore, to anticipate, as far as is possible, future needs and opportunities and prepare to meet them. War caught us practically unprepared; let us be ready for the conditions of peace.

Immigration a Problem of Numbers.

As has been said one of the most serious problems of peace will be that of immigration. If Canada is to make the twentieth century her own, and not permit its opportunities to slip through her hands to the Argentine and Brazil, she must develop her vast areas of unoccupied fertile land, and more adequately make use of the lands already settled. This means, of course, the placing of newcomers upon the land. We need not point out the fact that, in the past decade, immigrants have been permitted too largely to settle in the cities; and that, as a result, urban growth has increased at the expense of healthy rural growth. An investigation carried on in Winnipeg last winter, during the height of the unemployment period, showed that an astonishingly large proportion of the idle city dwellers had come from the farms of Europe; that upon their arrival they had received no assistance or guidance in getting upon the land; and that they had remained in Winnipeg and other large urban centres to swell the ranks of unskilled labor and depress the Canadian standard of living. Such conditions, on no account, must be permitted to continue after the war, when the flood of immigration once more will sweep to our shores.

In the main Canada's immigration problem will be in the future, as in the past, one of numbers. If many immigrants come with our returned soldiers a serious situation will face the country. It will require the most careful planning now to secure new markets for our agricultural and manufactured products after the war, when Canadian capital and labor will lose so largely their present employment. Nor can Canada turn to pre-war conditions. Our established markets have, for the time being, been broken up, and new lines of trade must be established. It will be a very difficult problem, therefore, at the outset, to absorb in the population our returning soldiers, not to speak of the immigrants that may come in the first year after peace is concluded.

When the industrial life of the country is once more established on a firm basis we could, with comparative ease, assimilate one hundred thousand immigrants a year. When the Montreal "Star," however, speaks of an increase in Canada's population in millions, a few years after the war, and when serious-minded business men write in approval of the project, it might well be asked whether the advocates of such a policy really understand what is involved. Leaving aside the question, for the moment, as to whether Europe can spare us these millions after the war, let us consider what such an enormous immigration would mean.

The war has disclosed, with startling vividness, what a practically uncontrolled tide of immigration may do to a nation. The United States has, in the

past, served as a model in this respect to Canada and other new countries. We have admired, while sometimes questioning, their power to assimilate such huge numbers of the foreign born. The European war has indicated, rather conclusively, that many naturalized Americans are such only in name, and not in fact.

The Americans, as the Canadians, gave little serious attention to this matter of immigration in the past. Whether the foreign born came in tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands, or even in millions, there was supposed to be ample room for them in the West, and in the expanding industries of the country. Moreover, many Americans were quite convinced that European immigration would not continue; already Ireland, England, Germany and the Scandinavian countries were sending a negligible number each year. Wages in North Europe and in the United Kingdom were increasing, and there was no longer the old need to adventure to the New World in search of work.

Since the outbreak of war, both in the case of the United States as well as of Canada, the problem has been one of emigration rather than of immigration. There are some observers who maintain that these conditions will persist after the war. Millions of men have been killed or disabled. Europe will have to be rebuilt; and those who might have emigrated to the New World will be employed at home, building railroads, constructing roads, and in raising ruined cities. Some students of the situation insist that wages in the United Kingdom will, after the war, be as high as those obtaining in Canada and the United States; and that even upon the Continent the demand for labor will send wages up to new levels. What, then, will be the probable trend of events?

Increased Immigration After the War.

Dead men will not emigrate, neither the maimed nor the sick. But, after all the needs of the Continent, at least, have been met, there will yet remain a huge surplus of labor that will turn longing eyes to Canada and the United States. The huge losses in men do not bulk large when compared with the total populations of the nations from which men will be glad to escape. Before the war Russia, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Greece, Rumania, Serbia, Bulgaria and Turkey had a combined population of about 300 millions; and the rate of increase is prodigious. Russia alone has a population of 170 millions, and has a natural increase of two millions a year. Italy had, before the war, a large annual emigration, and yet its population was growing fast. Canada has hardly touched, and the United States had only begun to tap, the huge reservoirs of men in the Balkans, in Asiatic Turkey and in Persia. It is reasonably safe to predict, therefore, that millions of men from the Old World will yet seek the shores of Canada and the United States.

Continental Europe Will Furnish Emigrants.

The United Kingdom will scarcely lose much of its population by way of emigration. England has maintained all her old markets outside of Europe, and has, indeed, strengthened her position in Canada, the United States, South America, and the Far East, relatively, if not actually. Her most formidable trade rival, Germany, will be excluded from these markets during the course of the war, and may never recover her former footing. England's merchant marine is practically intact; and if the nation is spending money it is earning and saving as never before. Higher wages and plenty of work on European account will, therefore, likely keep the people of the United Kingdom at home, after the war. Neither is it likely, as we have been told, that her soldiers, once accustomed to the open life will not go back to factory life. They will, in all probability, be glad to return to sheltered work, having had a surfeit of "the simple life," in the open.

In Germany the losses to capital have been great, and will be much greater before the war is over. These losses will have to be made good, in large part, before employment will again become normal. As has been said, her foreign commerce, overseas at least, has been lost. Germany and Austria-Hungary, and to a lesser extent, France, will therefore, find very great difficulty in reabsorbing millions of men now in their armies into a dislocated commerce and industry. It

is evident, then, that many of these men will emigrate and find their way to the New World.

The Transition Period.

As we have already pointed out the transition period from war to peace will be difficult, as was the transition from peace to war in August, 1914. It will be more difficult, indeed; for it is easier, on the whole, for the industries of a country to contract, than to expand. We are told everywhere that the wars of the past brought with them, at their close, unprecedented prosperity. This was true of the Civil War in the United States; but the Republic had vast natural resources and a comparatively simple industry. It may be pointed out, however, that the Napoleonic wars brought untold misery in their train, and not prosperity. In the present case, the jobs of the millions of men on the fighting line have been taken, in great degree, by women. Taxes will be high, and the Powers as a whole, and especially the Teutonic Powers, will have to cut down their expenditures, and economize. This will mean less work in the armament factories, and be it remembered that great numbers of men have been so employed in the past, especially in Germany, Austria and France. It is difficult to predict, but it seems reasonably safe to say that economic pressure will drive men from the European Continent, westward.

Effect of Peace Terms.

No matter what the peace terms may be, millions of men will be subject to foreign rule, and will endeavor to escape that rule. Past experience proves the point. Russian emigrants who have come, in the past, to the New World have not been Russians, but Poles, Jews, Letts, Germans, Ruthenians and so forth. From Austria have come Poles, Bohemians, Jews, and Slovenians. From the Balkans, whether from the rule of the Turk or otherwise, came Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbians, Jews and Montenegrins. It is utterly impossible to give racial and political freedom to small, and even large, groups of these nationalities, scattered as they are in the most bewildering way throughout Europe. These people, therefore, much more than in the past, will seek employment and political freedom in Canada and the United States.

Importance of Organizing for Peace.

Hence the importance of preparing now, in time of war, for peace, the immigration problem, otherwise, may become for us an overwhelming one. To assimilate into our population of seven or eight millions, in one year, one hundred thousand foreigners is in itself an achievement. In a year or two after the war, foreigners will be entering Canada by the hundreds of thousands. What effect will this huge tide of immigration have upon our standard of living, upon the labor of women and children, upon hours of labor, upon pauperism? Will the slum question, bad as it now is, become more acute? These are questions which must be faced here and now, bearing as they do upon our most vital interests. And above all, the Government should, under its present Commission or otherwise, grapple seriously with the problem of how most economically and efficiently the newcomers may be placed upon the land.

Britain's Foreign Trade

The total English imports and exports by months during 1915, as compared with the two years previous are as follows:—

Imports.	1915.	1914.	1913.
Jan.	£67,401,006	£68,005,009	£71,243,489
Feb.	65,268,814	62,053,651	63,791,938
Mar.	75,590,918	66,947,315	61,347,145
April	73,678,288	61,626,830	62,956,474
May	71,644,966	59,099,290	61,277,762
June	76,117,797	58,281,653	58,322,611
July	75,548,147	59,376,484	61,786,752
Aug.	69,496,695	42,342,707	56,011,530
Sept.	70,292,919	46,006,607	61,359,086
Oct.	67,791,435	51,379,435	71,732,893
Nov.	35,638,619	24,601,619	52,756,807
Dec.	*70,000,000	67,554,960	71,111,857
Exports.			
Jan.	£28,247,592	£47,206,165	£56,151,650
Feb.	26,176,937	41,261,797	50,918,994
Mar.	30,176,066	44,518,661	51,323,170
April	32,169,733	39,946,822	53,111,309
May	38,618,992	42,051,190	34,487,947
June	33,233,568	39,872,976	51,377,685
July	34,721,511	44,405,380	55,475,551
Aug.	32,438,855	24,211,271	52,261,228
Sept.	32,308,432	26,647,101	49,227,877
Oct.	31,967,815	28,601,815	56,178,843
Nov.	35,638,619	24,601,619	52,756,807
Dec.	*35,000,000	32,149,474	53,055,448

* Estimated.