

# Demobilization

Safeguards necessary  
Voluntary retirement suggested—Issued involved

By J. W. MACMILLAN.

Mr. Brougham Villiers in his book "Britain after the Peace" has distinctly aided the public discussion of the important and pressing problem of getting the men now in uniform back into civilian life without disturbance of the social order. Much of the book relates particularly to conditions in Britain, and is not applicable to Canada. But the central proposition, dealing with the control of the flow of human material from military occupations into the callings of peace, is pertinent to any land whose men have been in the great war. It is this central proposition which I wish to discuss in this paper.

In a word, his proposal is that the control should be exerted from the side of industry and not from the side of the military. If the war office, or the military council, is to be charged with the task it will undoubtedly proceed to release the army gradually. It will distribute the returned forces throughout the Dominion while they are yet under discipline, probably to the points where they were recruited. It will demobilize a certain number of battalions or batteries on a certain day, and then, after a few weeks or months, more batteries or battalions, and so on till the work is completed.

Now, this sort of thing contains no preventive of unemployment, or of hardship to the men, or of possible disturbance to the peace. Many men enlisted far from their homes. Very many enlisted in the far west, where the industrial conditions in the after-the-war period may not be good. There is no correspondence between the trades represented in any military unit and the probable demand for labor on any given date. Suppose a battalion contains five hundred mechanics, five hundred farmhands, and two hundred office men. It might be that at the time and in the place of that battalion's disbandment there should be jobs open to a thousand farmhands, to a hundred mechanics and to fifty office hands. Then would there result a serious shortage of farm labor, with a glut in the shops and offices. The military authorities are at the wrong end of the problem.

Mr. Villiers makes the bold suggestion that no man should be discharged from the army. He should leave it only of his own choice. Instead of being driven forth to look for work, he should have the work come and invite him. Some employment agency machinery would be superimposed so that each soldier would learn of the openings for which he was suited. But it would be up to the employers to provide attractions which would woo the workers from the ranks.

Leaving to one side for a moment the objections which immediately present themselves let us consider the advantages of such a scheme. In the first place it would absolutely prevent any public disturbance. There would be no unemployment, no rioting of hungry men in the streets, no civil war and anarchy. How great the danger is of violence after peace has been declared and the veterans of the war return to their homes no one can say. Prediction is always unreliable, yet there is no getting anywhere without foresight. Even such foresight as the average man is capable of has not been used because of the absorbing interest of the war itself. He has not thought of the days after the war because he is thinking so intensely of the present days. The present erects a curtain which more even than in normal times obscures the future. To win the war has been so supremely important, and withal so difficult, that our thoughts have been concentrated on that. Yet the new situation will arise suddenly as soon as the war has been won. It will contain immense possibilities of disorder. There may be enforced idleness, cutting off of income, privation, hardship for hundreds of thousands of Canadians. That would be bad enough, but things will hardly become so bad without becoming worse. Sullenness, discontent, angry complaint against the government will surely accompany any destitution. Will it not go farther still? Many of the sufferers will be fresh from scenes where violence was common, where violence was the approved way of getting one's will accomplished. There will be among them men capable of leadership, and all of them will be trained to obey the word of military command. The coming situation is not one to be lightly disregarded.

No civilized country is ever lacking its problem of unemployment. Trades union statistics in Britain

show that in prosperous times about four per cent of the members of the unions are out of work, the percentage rising to ten or higher in times of depression. Among the unorganized and relatively unskilled trades the amount of unemployment is certainly greater. The attendant hardship has so impressed the social conscience of Britain that far-reaching schemes of relief and rectification have been adopted. A similar condition prevails, without doubt, in Canada, while we have done nothing to remedy it. But in both Canada and Britain the current pity for the unemployed is mitigated by the suspicion that some at least of those out of work are not anxious to be at work, that part of the problem of unemployment is in reality the problem of the unemployable. No such feeling can be admitted regarding the returned soldier. Their plight is not their fault. They did not make the war. They did not want it. They went, at the solicitation of their country, to save civilization from being overthrown. They will return as the victorious deliverers of their country. Many of them made huge sacrifices in going. All of them risked their lives. They have brought immense honor and glory to Canada. The problem of their restoration to the paths of peace should not be regarded as their personal problem, but as a burden laid upon the whole country.

The city of Winnipeg is just completing a new water works system. The waters of Shoal Lake, a hundred odd miles away, are to be distributed to the homes of the citizens. Every kitchen sink and bathtub in Winnipeg is to be charged with a supply of the pure soft water of this distant lake. How is this distribution being effected? By the water being turned into Winnipeg in one huge flood? Or, by the several streets being flooded one by one, leaving it to each citizen to deal as he can with uncontrolled and seething billows washing at his doorstep and flooding his cellar? Not at all. There has been provided an intricate and competent pipe system leading from the lake to the city, with ramifications to each tap, so that each citizen may get what water he wants in sufficiency and security. Not until the pipe system has been completed and connected will a single drop of water be turned on. The city waits on the water, and keeps it in control so that only so much water is released as can be profitably used. Surely this is the wise method to employ in the similar problem of distributing, under highly critical conditions, the labor of the country to its numberless factories, shops, stores and farms.

It must not be forgotten that not only the returned soldiers but an army of munition workers, and a host of women who have been drawn into industry, will

be thrown into the host of those for whom work will have to be found. It is probable that, if the pressure of the returning men is taken off, the other classes will be absorbed. Some of the women, of course, will not desire to continue at work. A sharper problem will be that class commonly known as "foreigners." Many of them are Canadian citizens, and until the last Dominion election had been the deciding voters in many western constituencies. These will be the first to lose their jobs, if any can be first when the whole industrial debacle will come in a day. But we cannot let them starve. And, in truth, most of their shortcomings are less their own fault than that of the people of Canada. We invited them to come. We deserted them on the ocean dock, leaving them without guidance to become the prey of all sorts of sharks and shysters. Our politicians hurried them into citizenship, and used their votes to subvert the will of the English-speaking voters. In all this they have been passive, not doing, but done unto. We need them now, whether we needed them formerly or not, for many classes of manual labor have been taken out of the hands of the English-speaking stock. A labor caste system has been formed, with it stubborn sanctions, and it is impossible now, in many places in Canada, to get the old-time worker to return to the rougher kinds of labor. Thus our problem is intensified, and the provision of employment for "foreigners" is necessary.

Such a plan as Mr. Villiers suggests looks like an impossibly expensive one. And it may be at once admitted that it will require a large outlay of money. From the standpoint of expense we are worse off than Britain, because our rates of pay to soldiers are higher. But the issues involved are so extraordinary that considerations of expense should not be determinative, unless indeed the cost is actually impossible. And, in that case, it can mean only that we are unable to make an honest attempt to solve the problem. We will have no choice but to shoot Niagara and hope that all will be well.

I think it likely that the great majority of the men in the army will accept the first reasonable chance to get out of it. They are war-weary, and fret at the discipline. They want to get back again into the old ways. Thus we need not fear that the great mass of the returned men will refuse to cooperate with the government in its endeavors to transfer them smoothly into civilian life. However, there may be a final residue who are not so minded. For these unwilling ones, after the larger portion of the army has been absorbed, and the country has been revived by the rehabilitation of its industries, it will not be difficult to find a way out. It may be that we shall continue some of them as a permanent force. Some of them may be utilized as police. And, for the others, if they demand that the country support them without effort on their part, some final pressure can easily be found. Such a spirit would be very unpopular among the great majority of their comrades, and they would find few defenders. Canadian soldiers have not been slackers in war, and will not become slackers in peace.

## Disappointments and Consolations

Sir—In a recent issue of your valuable paper I have noticed two very striking articles, one upon certain disappointments which await us when the war is over, and one upon the Canadian Divorce Law. I much dread the coming of a Divorce Court, with all its intermeddling.

To touch, however, upon these two disappointments which await us. One is the notion that the returned soldier will soon make eager farmers. Probably in that we are destined to be disappointed. The other is the idea that there will be some sort of huge rush of immigration at once after the war. Perhaps, the real truth is that the great burden of the debt, and of the taxation, which has been built up by the war, will be left to be borne chiefly by the shoulders of the unarmed and civil population, which remains quietly at its daily work in the city. Neither the returned soldiers, nor any tide of fresh European immigration, will, perhaps, be found close at hand to help us.

Among other sources of income out of which the interest upon the war bonds will then be met, doubtless, no small share will be the inheritance taxes. The estates of dead men will pay large taxation at the close of the war. It will make little difference how the dead men themselves in each case came to die. Whether it be that the man ultimately has died of the Spanish influenza, or been killed in this war, or has had an accident, or has died of ordinary

sickness, or has died of suicide, or old age, the State will take a large slice at the time of death of his property in the form of taxation. It matters not to what extent the man may have been responsible for his own death; whatever be the cause, or the ground of death, the result will be much the same; the State will be found to take no inconsiderable share of his property away from him in the form of taxation.

Well, then, to proceed, there exists a certain remarkable analogy, as it has always seemed to me, between death and divorce. Death—or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say, suicide—plays much the same part to the individual body, that divorce plays to the entire home, and the household. Much as it is with death, so divorce tears the members of the home apart, limb from limb; it leaves the little children in the world deserted without a father or a mother; it forces the little children to dishonour their mother, or their father, or both; it sets a man at variance against his own father, and a daughter against her mother; and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and assures in a truly admirable manner, though in a somewhat different sense from the word of the Gospel, that a man's "foes" shall be the very men of his own household. I expect to die one of these fine days in some manner or other. I do not expect actually to reside

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