

# The Chronicle



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### SOME ASPECTS OF AFTER-WAR TRADE

At a time when the whole nation is directing its energies towards a supreme effort in warfare and war-production, and the menace of the enemy is insistent, discussion of the possibilities and problems of after-war trade, may at first sight appear out of place. Yet, if there is one fact of practical importance more than another which the war has emphasized, it is the vital necessity of long views, of steady, long-continued preparations against future developments. The upheaval in Canadian trade and industry at the cessation of hostilities will almost certainly be immensely greater than that which occurred on their outbreak in 1914. Then the blow was softened to some extent by the prior advent of a period of industrial depression. But it is to be expected that the war-time activities of Canadian industry will be carried on, practically at their maximum of pressure, until the actual conclusion of peace. No one but a fool would prophesy, yet there are at least conceivable circumstances in which peace might eventually come, with the stealth and speed of war's advent four years ago. However that may be, there is no doubt of the stupendous effects upon Canadian industry, which the advent of peace will bring, and there is some reason to believe that Canadian business, even as a whole, are not, in the midst of present prosperity, giving that consideration to the problems of the future which they demand.

There was a time, in the early stages of the war, when the opinion was unduly held in Canada, that the conclusion of peace would present an unparalleled opportunity for Canadian manufacturers in world markets. The downfall of Russia, which the optimists had marked out as a most promising field, and the entry of the United States into the war, thereby removing any chance of favourable discrimination by the Allied peoples, in favour of the Canadian manufacturer as against the American, effectively squelched this hope. So far from any anticipation of this kind being realised, it is now seen that Canadian manufacturing industry is likely to bear the brunt of the hardships involved in the economic changes which the advent of peace will bring. During the war, Canadian manufacturers have had an immense export trade, simply thrust upon them. But with the coming of peace, these markets will have gone, and in the opening-up of new ones, the manufacturers will, as it seems, find themselves engaged in competition, compared with which competition in world-markets before the war was child's play.

To some extent, the European countries will be hampered at the conclusion of peace by lack of raw materials. But allowing for this, who can doubt that the energies of their peoples will be intensely directed to the speedy building-up of the export trades in manufactures, in order to pay for the foodstuffs which they will continue to require and to meet the interest upon the heavy burnings which they have made abroad during the war-period. Their industrial capacity, it is to be remembered, has been immensely enlarged as a result of the war. British steel-making capacity, for example, is calculated as reciting this year, a figure 50 per cent. in excess of that of 1914, and authorities speak of the necessity of an annual export trade of 7,000,000 to 8,000,000 tons after the war. With the conclusion of peace also, American business energies will also be directed, as they have never been directed before, to the supply of foreign markets, until recently monopolised by Europe. Under such circumstances, the lot of the Canadian manufacturer, who expires to an overseas trade will not be a happy one. Shipbuilding and the pulp and paper industry are perhaps, likely to continue uninterrupted activity, but in the majority of other manufacturing lines the advent of peace, cannot but mean a temporary paralysis for Canadian industry.

Reference has already been made to the European countries' shortage of foodstuffs and raw materials, a shortage which will certainly continue for some years after the war, probably severely enough to make trading in these supplies a matter of continued governmental regulation. Obviously, these will form the mainstay of Canada's export trade in the years immediately following the war, and not of Canada's export trade only but of the whole industrial and financial fabric of the Dominion. A vigorous demand from abroad at high prices for our foodstuffs and raw materials will possibly not only stimulate increased agricultural operations, but the more thorough development of Canada's immense mineral resources and general marked activity by such industries as lumbering. Activity in these lines would eventually result in the enlargement of the home market for Canadian manufactures, and a gradual permeation of prosperity throughout the whole Dominion. It is not to be too easily supposed, however, that this would be a speedy process. General Mewburn, speaking in Parliament the other day, said that if the war ended to-morrow, it would take eighteen months to bring home the Canadian troops.

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