

Some Views on the Economic Activity of the Belgian Congo

It is indeed a striking fact without any precedent in history, that a Colony without a mother-country should reveal herself, as the Belgian Congo did during the war and in spite of same.

The collection of taxes which is said to be the barometer of Colonial prosperity, actually increased, in 1915, from 8 to 11 million francs (one franc being about 20 cents) and in 1916, from 11 to 13 million. The revenue, which rose from 32 million, in the year to 43, in 1917, was estimated at 50 million in 1918.

As far as agriculture is concerned, the development achieved during the war proved simply to be wonderful, chiefly as regards the production of rubber, ivory, oil, palmnuts, ropal, cocoa and rice.

RUBBERS.—The rubber production nearly reached, in 1916 the same quantity as in 1909 when a record was reached under the late regime of governmental working of natural resources: 3,232 tons being exported (transit excluded). This increase was accounted for thanks more to the tenacity of trade and to the activity of the natives, than to the prevailing prices.

IVORY.—In spite of the unfavourable situation of the European market, the exports of ivory from the Belgian Congo largely increased in 1916, which year witnessed the largest production of ivory since the foundation of the Colony: 318 tons.

BALMOIL.—The tropical Congo is the country of oil and there will never be too much oil on the market. In 1914 the Colony was producing 222 tons of oil in the High-Congo region. The production increased, in 1915, to 1,425 tons, and the amount reached in 1916 was 2,311 tons. Demand did not, however, encourage production, which for the whole Colony, exceeded by 73 per cent the figure of 1915—3,850 tons against 3,407.

PALMNUTS.—A large increase is also to be pointed out as far as the exports of this tropical produce is concerned: 22,425 tons in 1916, against 11,024 tons in 1915. In most parts of the High Congo, the work is merely starting. Elaeis constitutes for the Colony an immense wealth.

COPAL.—The production of this gum reached, in 1916, an amount without precedent. It actually exceeded by more than 100 per cent the figure of 1915, 8,677 tons against 4,265 in 1909. On the European market copal of superior quality, however, was not very briskly asked for, while prices remained at a standstill. The medium and inferior qualities were favoured with rising prices.

COCOA.—The cocoa from the Congo is highly appreciated on the European market. The production, which, in 1913, amounted to 680 tons, reached 770 tons, in 1916.

COFFEE.—The native produce is gradually taking the place of the coffee re-exported from Europe. The Congo coffee together with the native cocoa will, in no time, be the object of exportation on a large scale.

RICE.—Cultivation of rice in the Oriental Province and in Kasai has taken an extraordinary development, and has given results most encouraging for the planters. While in 1913, 4,290 tons of rice were imported into the Congo Colony, this country was able to itself export a thousand tons in 1916. 2,400 tons of this produce moreover were sent, during the war, to the Belgian Colonial troops fighting in German East Africa. The two chief districts for the production of rice are those of Stanleyville and Lova.

Turning now to the production of mines, we notice the same remarkable development. The output of minerals actually increased in 1915 by a couple of million francs and reached the figure of 14 million and a half in 1916.

COPPER production in the mines of the "Union Minière du Haut-Katanga" reached, in 1916, 22,165 tons, against 14,040 tons in 1915, 10,336 in 1914 and 5,411 in 1913.

GOLD could be produced in the Colony on a higher scale than the present. There, however, is a serious improvement: 3,296 kilog. in 1916 (a kilo is slightly equal over 2 pounds) against 907 in 1912. On the other hand, there has been a considerable increase in the export of precious stones: 11,671 grams (907 grams are equal to 2 pounds) in 1916, against 5,000 in 1913. In the "Kasai Co., Ltd.," alone, the output of diamonds which in 1913 amounted to 15,000 carats, reached 54,000 carats in 1916, and 85,000 carats in 1917.

The prospects of this wonderful Colony are indeed most encouraging for Belgian initiative. The coun-

try extends over 2 million square kilometres, has a population of some 15 million and possesses a river system of 15,000 kil, beside a soil which may be called one of the richest of the world. But in order to draw from its varied production adequate profits, the country has to be worked with stubborn activity and means of communications have to be considerably increased maybe. A magnificent commercial development is anticipated when these improvements are carried out.

Commercial undertakings in the Congo are made easy for every one for men of every nationality have

equal chances, thanks to the prevailing perfect policy of free trade. There is neither transit duty nor monopoly whatsoever nor privilege of any kind. On the other hand there is a need for development of the maritime communications between the Belgian Colony, Europe, America and foreign countries. In this respect it may be said that a direct service will be established soon between Boma and the U.S. of America.

The above summary might well be concluded with a quotation from the well known English review "The Field." This paper recently remarked that the African territory would be a source of honour and prosperity for the Belgian who have set to the World an inspiring example of love of liberty and who have given proof of this sincere wish that their Colony should enjoy the same freedom as the mother country.

BRITISH ELECTION NOTES.

Coalition Has 235 Majority.

BRITISH PARTY STANDING.

Coalition Unionists	334
Coalition Liberals	127
Coalition Labor	10

Coalition total 471

OTHER PARTIES.

Unionists	46
Asquith Liberals	37
Labor	65
National Party	2
Independents	5
Socialists	1
Sinn Fein	73
Irish Nationalists	7

Total 236

Seats in Parliament	707
Coalition members	471

Coalition majority 235

Only one woman, the Sinn Feiner candidate, Countess Marcievicz, was elected.

Asquith, Simon, McKenna, Runciman, Samuel and Masterman, members of the late Liberal Cabinet, were defeated.

Philip Snowden, Ramsay Macdonald, W. C. Anderson and Arthur Henderson, the premier Pacifists, were ignominiously defeated.

All the members of the Coalition Cabinet were re-elected.

Seventy-three Sinn Feiners were elected as against seven Nationalists. John Dillon, the Nationalist leader, was defeated by Edward de Valera, in East Mayo.

Christabel Pankhurst was defeated by a Laborite only by a narrow margin.

Grant Morden secured a majority of 6,457.

Women and soldiers voted for Lloyd George.

The net result of the election is summed up in the papers as a personal triumph for Premier Lloyd George in the disappearance of the two great parties, the Liberals and Irish Nationalists. The papers without exception emphasize that the election is not merely a great triumph but a great opportunity for Lloyd George, as the country insists on the carrying out of a vast programme of social reform. They declare that the governing classes are on trial, and if they fail to satisfy the country, a painful reckoning awaits them at the next election, which may come sooner than is now apparent.

CORRESPONDENCE.

CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR UNIONS.

Editor Journal of Commerce:

Sir,—It is proposed that the Civil Service Association and Federation become members of the Dominion Labour Convention. It is well known that the Convention have a political and social platform. It is not needful to discuss that platform, save the palpable fact that it espouses and represents certain distinct and special interests, interests that concern, especially those who are combined and associated. As organized labour they represent a considerable body, but only a part of the nation. The right to organize and to formulate any platform they please is not in question. To become a strong and powerful party in the State is their privilege. Also to combine with the "Great War Veterans' Association" to that end.

Now what is the position of the Civil Service? It belongs to the nation as a whole; is employed and paid for by the nation. The right to organize within the service to promote interests, special, as Civil Servants has been acknowledged and is not in question; but, to be members, as an association of Civil Servants, of a body that has a platform that has so many elements that are not accepted by a large body of the people, that is a very different position. Civil Servants, as citizens, have full rights with others as to views and opinions, but there is a fair limitation of action, not alone by custom, but involved in the position.

As is well known, we have two functions of Government, the political and the administrative. The Civil Service is the permanent administrative, not dependent upon changing Governments. Manifestly the primary obligation of the Service is to the nation as a whole. To square that obligation with the proposed action on the part of some seems to not a few Civil Servants scarcely possible.

Further, the inception of the Civil Service Association was called for, to specially benefit those within it, with the well understood conditions that have prevailed since 1867, as to the fundamental relations of the Service to the nation. And, may it be added, that, it calls for no great foresight to see that if the proposed affiliation is consummated, the rocks are not far ahead.

CIVIL SERVANT.

CONSCRIPTION OF WEALTH.

Editor Journal of Commerce:

Sir,—It seems plain to us all that wealth is the surplus production of labour, left over after the necessities of labour have been supplied. We think that we know that this surplus is obtained by the exploitation of the natural resources of the earth, which were given by Providence for the benefit of all mankind, and intended by Nature for the tiding over of periods of distress, such as wars, famine and pestilence.

Since the many are improvident, thinking only of to-day and trusting that to-morrow will provide for itself, it happens that this surplus falls into the custody of the few whom the Giver of all has provided to hold it in trust for contingencies that will arise.

Such a contingency did arise. A ruthless foe sought to deprive us, not of our lives, but our wealth. Our young men have gone forth, have fought and defeated the foe. Many have given their lives; many more are disabled. Our young women and older ladies have steadfastly worked to mitigate their discomforts, while we, the trustees of the nation's wealth, which the enemy coveted, have remained behind to speculate on our neighbours' fears and our soldiers' miseries, to double and treble the immense sums already held in trust for them.

Is it right, is it just, is it common sense, to ask these defenders of our honour, of the purity of our women, of the respect of our children, to return and take up the task of the already over-burdened sons of toil to pay us, unworthy stewards, five and a half per cent. interest on the money we have failed to restore? Or shall we resolve that the wealth of the people pay for the defence of the wealth of the people?

Correspondence on this subject, either through the Press or in private, will be gladly received.

Yours truly,
ARTHUR HOOD.

Shelburne, N.S., Dec. 18, 1918.