

## THE CANADIAN REPATRIATION COMMITTEE.

### A Comprehensive Outline of Its Activities and Composition.

(First Article).

A problem confronting Canada, best described by any one word as "employment" or "readjustment," has led the Dominion Government to create a sub-committee of Cabinet, known as the Repatriation Committee and composed of the ministers of six departments directly concerned in finding and administering the remedies.

The problem was created by three causes:

- (1) The demobilization of the Canadian forces;
- (2) The cessation of war orders, throwing thousands of civilians out of work; and
- (3) Public uncertainty about the future.

The remedy has been described as Reconstruction: that is, the re-absorption of soldiers and civilian war workers into normal civilian occupations under living and working conditions worthy of the great sacrifices that have been made. This entails the creation and provision of opportunities for employment, the proper distribution of employment, and the securing of decent living and working conditions.

#### Departmental Machinery.

The machinery to do this exists in the organizations of the Dominion and Provincial Government Departments, the social and fraternal societies, the industrial and commercial concerns, the labour unions and returned soldiers' associations.

The Repatriation Committee was created for the purpose of co-ordinating and advising all of these bodies, directing their energies to the one common end, and eliminating duplication of effort.

The functions of the six departments administered by the members of the committee can be summarized briefly as follows:

The Department of Labour will conduct employment offices.

The Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment will, through its own staff and by co-ordinating the activities of the Provincial Returned Soldier Commissions, give special attention to the ex-soldier members of the community in need of re-establishment in successful civil life, either through disability or merely because of demobilization.

The Department of the Interior, through the Soldier Settlement Board, is administering a land and loan scheme for the purpose of assisting soldiers to take up farming.

The Department of Immigration and Colonization is superintending the return to Canada of soldiers' wives and families now resident in the Old Country.

The permanent work of the Department of Agriculture will be adapted at certain points to assist soldier settlers as it now assists farmers generally.

The Department of Public Information is lending part of its staff to do propaganda work for the Repatriation Committee.

The Repatriation Committee launched its own organization by the appointment of a Director, H. J. Daly, a prominent business man of Toronto and Ottawa. Vincent Massey, formerly secretary of the War Committee of Cabinet has been named Assistant Director and Secretary. There is also a small internal organization for purposes of office efficiency.

To carry out the chief function of the Committee the Director holds conferences attended by two or three representatives of each department interested and the Director's staff. These are known as the Co-ordinating Committee. At the meetings the various department representatives announce their activities for the others to hear, administrative policies are discussed between the Director and the departments, and occasionally recommendations to the Cabinet Committee are made. In order that there may be no overlapping, a series of charts has been prepared illustrating in graphic form the functions and organization of each department and each branch thereof. These are constantly before the Co-ordinating Committee.

The centralized staff of the Repatriation Committee includes a secretary of publicity, a secretary for the municipalities, a secretary for voluntary organizations, and four field secretaries.

The secretary of publicity is assisted by the publicity branch of the Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment, which has been temporarily transferred to the Repatriation Committee, and by part of the staff of the Department of Public Information which has been similarly placed at the disposal of the Repatriation Committee.

The Repatriation Committee's co-ordinating functions will be discharged throughout the country by four field secretaries, one of whom will cover the Maritime Provinces, one Quebec, one Ontario and one, with possibly an assistant, the Western Provinces. These secretaries will move from place to place within their territories watching for evidences of failure to co-operate and endeavouring whenever possible to bring the parties together with a view to establishing lines of demarcation between their respective activities. The failure on the part of any organization to do the part of the work which is expected of it will be inquired into and reported upon to Ottawa so that other means of achieving the same purpose may be devised.

The basic reconstruction work is that of the Federal departments and the key position among these is held by the Department of Labour because of its chain of employment offices, where without paying any fee men seeking work can obtain lists of vacant positions and be brought into contact with employers in need of their services.

#### Labour Offices.

The employment offices are set up by the provinces in accordance with an agreement to which each provincial government and the Federal Department of Labour subscribed under the recent parliamentary enactment. By the agreement, employment offices are to be established in every town of 10,000 population and over, and in smaller places as required, especially in towns where military dispersal stations are established. In the Maritime Provinces no employment offices have been opened by the provincial governments, so the Department of Labour is opening offices of its own in the towns which come within the policy. Where the provinces have established the bureaux the Dominion

Government pays 50 per cent. of the cost and retains the right to standardize. All offices throughout the country will thus use identical forms and will report to headquarters along parallel lines.

In each province the various employment bureaux are linked up by a central provincial clearing house at the capital, to which each office reports daily the number of men placed and the surplus or deficit of labour. The provincial clearing house is thus enabled to make transfers of labour within the province for the purpose of applying the surplus in one locality to the deficit in another.

To deal with interprovincial transfers the Dominion Government is establishing three Federal clearing houses, one at Winnipeg for the West, one at Ottawa for Ontario and Quebec, and one at Halifax for the three Maritime Provinces. There will be no provincial clearing houses reporting to the Halifax office, however, under the circumstances.

To advise the superintendent of each local office there is an advisory council consisting of a representative of the employers of the district, a representative of labour, and a third neutral party. Attached to each office also are two or more canvassers, whose business it will be to "drum up" lists of openings in the local and nearby industries. They are in effect salesmen of the services of the government employment offices and will be given short courses in salesmanship before being put on the road. One such course has already been held for what might be called the pioneer detachment in Ontario.

#### The Two Curves.

The Dominion Government's interest in the administration of the employment offices is in the hands of the Employment Branch of the Department of Labour. It will discharge three functions:—

1. Supervising the Dominion clearing houses.
2. Standardizing all local offices.
3. Collecting, collating and publishing information, chiefly statistical, regarding employment conditions.

This information will be obtained in four ways as follows:—

1. By reports from the employment offices and clearing houses.
2. Through field agents of the department operating in the leading industries, one for each, such as ship-building, lumbering, mining, etc. Reports upon anticipated requirements over a long period will be prepared by these field agents.
3. By weekly reports from the trade unions on employment conditions in the respective trades.
4. By a weekly questionnaire from employers.

The questionnaire has been studied carefully in preparation and takes the form of a post card returnable weekly by all employers of over twenty-five men. The card shows the pay-roll for the previous week, the separations from the firm analyzed by cause and occupation, and anticipated requirements for the immediate future. The employment office canvassers and the secretary of the Repatriation Committee for business organizations are expected to contribute greatly to promoting the general use of the questionnaire.

The information thus obtained will be published in two curves, one showing the labour available and the other showing the labour employed. The spread between the two curves should be a good barometer of employment. It is anticipated that this spread will grow at first and then, as the Government's reconstruction measures gather momentum, will diminish.

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