

The Prime Minister and the country are fortunate, indeed, that there should have been available a gentleman of the great learning and high character possessed by the minister to whom this portfolio has been entrusted.

Some Hon. SENATORS: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. McKEEN: It has been said that Canada's external affairs will in future years tend to become more and more concerned with matters of trade and commerce. As one who represents British Columbia and whose daily life is spent in direct association with the shipping activities of the seaport of Vancouver, I welcome this trend. Even more, perhaps, than those who come from the interior of the country, we on the western coast appreciate the vital importance of foreign trade. Our three great basic industries in British Columbia—lumbering, mining, and fishing—depend for their success, to a very large extent, upon exports.

During the war years British Columbia's production, and more specially its productive capacity, was tremendously increased. The population of the province has increased by almost fifty per cent in the past decade. The future welfare and prosperity of our people there depend upon our ability to foster and develop markets for the output of their industry.

British Columbians are especially concerned with the development of markets across the Pacific. No country in the world is more deeply concerned with the solving of the complex problems of our great ally and neighbour, China. Only with the restoration of peace to that troubled land can its people raise their standard of living and improve the communications throughout their vast territory. In that development Canada is peculiarly equipped to play an important part, and I sincerely hope that, in our concern with the more widely publicized problems of Europe, our Department of External Affairs will not overlook the vital importance of extending every possible aid to China.

At this moment in our history it is gratifying to have the assurance in the Speech from the Throne that the million young Canadians who interrupted their careers to spring to arms in the defence of freedom, have very largely been restored to their homes, to take their places in the social and economic life of the country.

In my opinion, the government is to be complimented on the speed and dispatch with which our overseas forces were returned to their homeland, and rehabilitated in industry. I am informed that only a few hundred, con-

cerned primarily with staff duties and the settlement of accounts, remain abroad. The complete lack of friction in the demobilization and rehabilitation process is due, not alone to the seven years of planning which began in 1939, but reflects the highest credit and honour upon the troops themselves. They have returned to civil life with the same high spirit of public service as they displayed in response to the recruiting appeal.

There had been discharged to civil life from the Canadian armed forces, up to December 31, 1946, no fewer than 976,229 members. On that same date the number of veterans registered with the National Employment Service of Canada for employment, including veterans of both wars, was 47,696. It is an amazing tribute to the spirit of the veterans and to the economic resiliency of Canada that the number of unemployed veterans on December 31, in midwinter, was less by 6,000 than the number in the midsummer month of June, 1946. Since VE Day in May, 1945, this country has absorbed into civil life no fewer than 723,782 members discharged from the armed forces. The government's programme of rehabilitation, so carefully planned throughout seven years of extensive study under the guidance of the Minister of Veterans Affairs, has made a tremendous contribution to this accomplishment.

Without going into the subject exhaustively, it may interest honourable senators to know that 247,584 veterans have received direct assistance through the five benefits of the Veterans Rehabilitation Act. As of November 30, 1946, 66,184 veterans had been awarded vocational training courses and 46,711 had been awarded courses in our universities and professional schools. The number of veterans entering upon business, professional and farming careers, who have been assisted through the early non-productive months by the benefit called "Awaiting Returns", is 33,158.

Aside altogether from the war service gratuities, which were paid to discharged members of the forces without any conditions attached to them, we find that nearly 400,000 veterans have drawn upon their re-establishment credit to the extent of \$78,000,000 for the purpose of acquiring homes, repairing their homes, and purchasing furniture and equipment for their homes. Another \$21,000,000 of re-establishment credit has been used in the form of working capital for business enterprises or the purchase of a business or the purchase of tools or equipment for a business or profession.

I draw attention to the fact that these large sums were paid out to veterans, not in the form of loans, but in the form of direct grants. In most cases, as in the case of the acquisition