

such a programme of national reform, but its outlines may be roughly sketched. In the first place we should establish a proper financial structure for this dominion and its provinces which will enable them to perform their respective functions with efficiency and economy. Second, we should ensure proper relations between industry and labour so that Canada may become a truly great industrial power. Finally, we should establish a policy for primary industry in Canada that will enable our primary producers to continue efficiently the production of the basic wealth of this country.

In this connection I hope that at a very early date the government will give this house an opportunity for a special debate on our wheat problem, with the house in committee of the whole. I urge that this debate should take place before the house rises for the Christmas recess, so that a carefully thought out wheat policy may be announced as early in the new year as possible. In my opinion such a debate would be preferable to a random discussion of the wheat question during the course of this debate.

Much of the programme of national reform which I suggest is contained in the recommendations of the royal commission on dominion-provincial relations, in what is called the Sirois report. I strongly recommend the recommendations contained in that report and sincerely urge their adoption at the earliest possible date. I was deeply stirred by the quiet announcement made by the Prime Minister that he had invited the premiers of the provinces to attend a conference here in Ottawa some time in January, and I read with interest his letter of invitation to the premiers with his indication of the government's approval of the report. I am glad to learn that all the provinces have indicated their intention of being represented. I sincerely hope that this conference will be successful, for I am convinced that the adoption of the recommendations and their implementation by the necessary legislative and administrative action will constitute the greatest act of Canadian statesmanship since confederation itself. At the same time it will serve the twofold purpose of increasing the efficiency of our war effort and establishing the foundations for a greater and stronger Canada, of which every Canadian may be justly proud.

In the short space of time at my disposal it would not be possible even to summarize the recommendations contained in the Sirois report. The main ones have to do with financial adjustments as between the dominion and the provinces. A very brief summary of these

[Mr. Thorson.]

financial recommendations appears on page 86 of volume 2 of the report. I find it difficult to restrain my language in expressing my appreciation of this report and the splendid principles upon which it is based. I believe it to be the outstanding Canadian document since confederation. It is likewise a human document; for it is concerned with the welfare of the people of Canada as a whole, through the maintenance and expansion of the national income and its better distribution for the purpose of providing a greater measure of social and economic security. The report realizes the need for national unity in this country. It is a great unifying document for Canada, but it does not in any sense propose any centralization of authority. It stresses the need of a national minimum standard of social services in Canada as essential to national unity, but it fully respects the federal system and completely preserves provincial liberty of action in spheres which are primarily cultural and social.

In my opinion the commissioners have successfully carried out the instructions that were given them, and we should be deeply grateful to them for the careful study which they have made and particularly for the singleness of purpose that runs through almost every line of the report: concern for the welfare of the people of Canada from coast to coast. They have in true reality recaptured the spirit of confederation itself. This is a great reconfederation document, applying the principles of confederation to the changed needs and conditions of to-day. The commissioners also stress the necessity of continued and increased cooperation between the dominion and the provinces. They do not conceive of the provinces of Canada as nine separate, independent entities but rather as nine provinces interdependent upon each other and bound together by one bond, the bond of Canada.

It has been urged that we should defer consideration of the report until after the war. I do not agree with this point of view. This country will be put to severe financial strains before this war is over, and we shall have to eliminate every financial obstacle that stands in our way. If our financial structure was utterly inadequate for Canada in time of peace, it is even more necessary now than it would be in peace-time to make the changes recommended by the report. They are essential to the success of our war effort, and I sincerely hope that when we are summoned again in the new year one of our major tasks will be the necessary legislative and administrative action to implement the recommendations of the Sirois report; for I am confident that if we do that a new era for Canada will begin.