

Soldier and the Land

Vice-President of Great War Veterans' Association Points to Need
of a New National Policy for Canada

The Canadian Council of Agriculture reproduces, in abridged form, the following article by Col. (Dr.) A. Mackenzie Forbes, of Montreal, Vice President on the National Executive of the G.W.V.A., which appeared in the April number of The Veteran.

A CAREFUL and broadminded examination of the Constitution of the Great War Veterans' Association will show that while this organization stands for many details of national policy which are specifically for the relief of the widows and children of fallen soldiers and those who, because of their physical injuries, have become the wards of the nation, the broad and general policy of the organization is to inculcate in its members loyalty to Canada and the Empire, and to render them unstinted service. The G.W.V.A. stands for Canada. Because the aim and object of this organization is for Canada, its officers, impelled not only by the dictates of their own consciences but by the strong desire of their constituents, have devoted much time and thought to those subjects of national importance which are at present being considered by the Government of Canada. Among the most important of these are the settlement of our agricultural lands and the pressing problem of the alien population of Canada. Local disorders directed against individuals and groups of aliens have always been deplored by the National Executive of the Great War Veterans' Association. Appealed to by the Government, this group of men has placed, and always will be ready to place its influence behind the efforts made by the local branches on behalf of law and order. But the two above mentioned vital points at issue remain of the utmost importance to the National Executive.

The world is in a state of transition and change. It is inevitable that Canada share in this change and all that it implies, but it is hoped that in Canada such change will come about slowly though surely. If I may interpret the aims and aspirations of the leaders of the returned soldiers' organization, I would say that they stand for a temperate and sane reconstruction of Canada on lines which will make this country a better and happier place for Canadians to live in.

LAND SETTLEMENT

The study of the problem of the development of our agricultural lands and the most important alien question has led our thinkers into the intricacies of national policy and political economy, and national policy may by some people be considered a subject beyond the ken of the members of the Great War Veterans' Association, but the problems of land settlement and the alien have been considered not selfishly, but only from a broad, national point of view. The question of the rehabilitation of our returned soldiers on our agricultural lands is not a matter of providing them with land or occupation. It is a question of settling on our farm lands those who have shown themselves to be among our best citizens, thus ensuring the future stability of British Institutions and our Canadian ideals of democracy.

An Order-in-Council dated Feb. 11, 1919, was passed under the provisions of the War Measures Act in order to assure that a scheme of land settlement should be available for returned men, and to enable them to settle in the rural parts of Canada and there cultivate the land. The advisability of passing this legislation by Order-in-Council was open to debate, but the National Executive of the G.W.V.A. urged the Government to do this in order that it might be made possible for our returning soldiers to begin their agricultural operations during the coming Spring. Indeed it was felt that this was a matter of urgency. Our men were coming back. Would they, a potential asset to Canada, become a real asset, or would they be permitted to return to Canada without any effort being made to assure their future as citizens in our Country?

The legislation enacted by this Order-in-Council has the approval of the returned soldiers as a class and especially of the Executive officers of the Great War Veterans' Association. They feel that it spells progress. They realize that few, if any, countries have ever passed a measure of so broad and progressive a character, and they realize that its scope may be made almost illimitable. They realize that such legislation, if taken advantage of, would lead many to our Canadian farms, and that through it there would be begun a policy of agricultural reconstruction which before all others would stabilize Canadian life.

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