

"A Business Government"

(From our London Correspondent.)

LONDON, Tuesday, August 21, 1917.

Strange as it may seem, it is quite possible to look upon the Lloyd George Administration as "the business Government," for which so many people yearn in this country. A review of the work done by Parliament since Mr. Lloyd George became Prime Minister and down to the present Recess which has interrupted the flow of legislation, reveals so much regard for permanent affairs, affecting the future more than the present, that it is worth while making special mention of them. It is the more necessary because, with the purpose of the Empire so unanimously bent toward the prosecution of the war, this aspect of the Imperial Government's activities is apt to be overlooked.

The principal decision of the mid-war Imperial Conference related to the inter-imperial trade and commerce of the future. It will be remembered that the Conference expressed itself in favor (a) of "specially favorable treatment and facilities," for inter-imperial trade; and (b) of emigration under the British flag. "In the future," said Mr. Lloyd George on April 27th, "we have decided that it is the business of statesmanship in Great Britain, as well as in the lands beyond the seas, to knit the Empire in closer bonds together of interest, of trade, of commerce, of business, and of general intercourse in affairs. . . . We believe that a system of preference can be established which will not involve the imposition of burdens upon food." There is now sitting a committee of ministers charged with the duty of making ready for giving effect to this resolution of the Imperial War Conference.

Another subject of Imperial interest arose out of the decisions of the Conference, and an inter-departmental committee is now preparing a scheme for the establishment in London of an Imperial Mineral Resources Bureau, in order that such resources may be developed and made available throughout the Empire.

IMPORTANT DECISION.

One of the most important and far-reaching decisions of the Imperial Conference concerned the future of India. India is now fully recognized in more ways than one as a "partner nation." The Imperial War Conference recorded its view that any readjustment of the constitution should recognize the right of India (as well as of the Dominions) to "an adequate voice in foreign policy and foreign relations." India is represented on the Imperial Mineral Resources Bureau. India is to be represented at all future Imperial conferences, which will now meet annually or even oftener.

The future government of India was the subject of a far-reaching statement made by the new Secretary of State (Mr. E. S. Montagu) this week. It will be fresh in your mind. There is to be an "increasing association of Indians in every branch of the Administration," and a "gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire." The Secretary of State will visit India during the winter "to consider with the Viceroy the views of local governments, and to receive with him the suggestions of representative bodies and others." It is difficult to read into this resolve any ulterior political motive; but the Morning Post, the one London journal which during the war is grinding a political axe, points out that those who have been working so strenuously in the cause of Imperial Preference, "are profoundly suspicious of schemes of self-government which do not at the outset specifically continue to the Imperial Government questions of Preference." In other words, the out-and-out Protectionists here are already beginning to show that they desire a preferential tariff framed in the interests chiefly of Great Britain. I can only say that this selfish object is by no means generally entertained. In this connection it may be recalled that when the British Parliament agreed to the Indian Government last March increasing the cotton import duty from 3½ per cent to 7½ per cent without increasing the counter-vailing excise duty at the same time, the House of Commons declared its opinion that this particular subject should be considered afresh "when the fiscal relationship of the various parts of the Empire to one another and to the rest of the world comes to be revised at the close of the war." The one thing sure

is that in future India will have a voice in settling this fiscal relationship. There must be nothing that will tend to weaken the complete unity of the Empire, either now or in the days to come.

Before leaving Imperial matters, this is the place to mention the success of the Government in getting together an Irish Convention on the subject of Home Rule. The Convention has not yet got into its stride; but one of the things it is almost certain to consider is the adoption of a Dominion form of government. And there is a strong body of opinion in Ireland that the fiscal policy of that country should be framed by itself in relationship to the general interests of the Empire.

CONDITIONS OF TRADE.

The condition of trade after the war occupies the minds of our best commercial men. The Government has taken several steps which indicate its purpose to deal with this matter very thoroughly. It has established the British Trade Corporation, whose fundamental object is to give financial assistance to British traders and manufacturers, so that young men, for example, without the capital of their older competitors shall have a chance of getting credit.

An even more significant step is the establishment of a Ministry of Reconstruction. The first head of this new ministry has had a long experience at the Ministry of Munitions, and this will stand him in good stead when he comes to deal with the trade problems of the future. Under the Ministry of Munitions some wonderful developments of Imperial trade have been worked out. In the matters of steel, of potash, of scientific instruments, we are at last and shall be able to remain independent of enemy sources. At the present moment, through the efforts of the Ministry of Munitions, our agriculturists are actually being supplied with potash. During the war we have steadily overcome the handicaps of that past in which we allowed the Germans to acquire control of industries now found to be essential to war. The present Minister of Reconstruction has pointed out that all this will enable us to found (as we have already founded under the stress of war) "great new industries and extensions on a vastly improved scale. . . . We have enough material at our disposal to-day to bridge over the transition between the disestablishment of the industries of war and the establishment of the industries of peace, without serious hardship."

AERIAL ACTIVITY.

I have but briefly indicated some of the responsibilities that will fall to the new Ministry of Reconstruction. There are many others. Apart from them—and continuing my review of the trade aspects of the Government's activities—it should be pointed out that in April there was set up a committee to investigate questions of aerial transport, both for civil and commercial purposes after the war.

The necessities of war have already brought about a revolution in agriculture in this country. The last work of Parliament before the Recess was to pass the Corn Production Bill into law. The next morning there appeared in the press an official notice stating that it was henceforward illegal to pay an able-bodied man employed in agriculture on time-work less in weekly wages and allowances than the cash equivalent of twenty-five shillings a week. Rates are to be fixed in due course, but in the meantime men who do not receive the minimum wage can recover in a court of law. It is also provided that rents are not to be raised in consequence of the passing of the Act. It gives the Board of Agriculture power to enforce proper cultivation; and, as you know, it fixes the minimum prices for wheat and oats for the six years ending 1922. For wheat this year the price is 60s a quarter of 504 lbs., falling to 45s in the last three years; and for oats the price is now 38s 6d per 336 lbs., falling to 24s.

This is not the only effect the war has had upon our agriculture. The Government has laid down a programme, not, as it has been erroneously supposed, to break up 3,000,000 acres of grass land, but to increase the area devoted to corn and potatoes by this acreage. Thus we have recovered almost a generation of lost ground at one stroke, and it is very clear that food production in these islands will remain at the higher quantity for many years to come. Further, the economic effect of the minimum wage in agriculture is beyond measure. The lasting benefit of it will be felt by the workers in every industry after the

war.

It is impossible in the space of this review to deal in detail with all the present Government has done which will affect our future prosperity. It has introduced standardization into shipbuilding, and by this and other means has enormously increased British tonnage and the potentiality of output. It has extended the State control of railways, and taken over and put new life into our canal system. As a part of this scheme it has regulated the distribution of coal, and by this step alone will save in transport at the rate of 700,000,000 ton miles per annum. In order to economize and cheapen food, it controls the flour mill, and has fixed the price of store cattle. It has put on foot an excellent scheme for the industrial training of partially disabled soldiers and sailors, so that it is now actually possible for a man to learn at the nation's expense a better trade than he had before the war.

One more point out of many in conclusion. The nation is embarked upon a very far-reaching reform in its education methods. The Bill introduced to Parliament a few days ago provides for full-time education of all children up to the age of 14; and part-time up to 18; it abolishes the half-time system; establishes nursery schools; regulates employment of children out of school hours; develops continuation schools; cares for the physical condition for children under education; and much else. Our leading Liberal weekly review has accused the Government of placing all education by means of this bill "under the shadow of industrial necessity." There are few people in this country who would support that distorted and narrow view, but its mere expression shows at any rate how thoroughly the mind and energies of this country are turned toward making the utmost of our industrial future.

Book Reviews

The Canadian Annual Review for 1916, edited by J. Castell Hopkins, has just made its appearance. The latest edition of the Canadian Annual is probably the most interesting of the many that have appeared from the pen of the present editor, owing to the fact that Canadian nationalism has taken on a new status through our entry into the World War. Among the many interesting chapters are the following: "The World War in 1916," "The British Empire in the War," "The United States and the War," "Canada and the War in 1916," "Canadians at the Front," while several chapters are devoted to provincial affairs, transportation interests and miscellaneous incidents and affairs. Altogether the publication has become a national institution and no editor's office, business man's or up-to-date man of affairs' library is complete without this interesting book.

The Canadian Mining Manual, 1916-17. Edited by Reginald E. Hore, editors of the Canadian Mining Review: Published by the Mines Publishing Co. Toronto.

In a country as richly endowed as Canada is with mineral wealth, information concerning our mines will always be in demand. It is very desirable that there should be available a work which gives one a general view of what minerals are found in the Dominion, what mining operations are being carried on and what are the prospects of future development. Such a book is the Canadian Mining Manual, first issued some years ago by the late B. T. A. Bell, of Ottawa, and now appearing under the direction of Mr. Hore. The editor's aim, as stated in his preface, is to present in convenient form useful and up-to-date information concerning the mines and minerals of Canada, availing himself for that purpose of company reports, Government publications, technical journals, proceedings of Mining Societies, and other sources of information. Each mineral is treated separately and the reader learns somewhat of the history of its discovery and development, the extent and character of present operations and the prospects for the future.

A useful chapter for reference is that which gives a list of the mining companies operating in Canada, with, in many cases, the personnel of the enterprise, from which we incidentally learn that Sir Douglas Haig is the President of a Canadian Mining Company. His most important mining operation in recent months, no doubt, was that at Messines, in which he had much Canadian assistance and which was carried out with a success that enables us to forgive him for not taking a more active part in mining in Canada. Mr. Hore's book is valuable to all who are in any way interested in Canadian mines, or who have occasion to seek information respecting the mineral wealth of the Dominion.