

Reconstruction

These three projects—the vigorous building of ships—the development of the St. Lawrence Power scheme—the establishment of labor bureaus may well be considered by any board charged with the business of heading off industrial depression.

By J. W. MACMILLAN.

In my last article I urged that the foundation of our reconstruction policy in Canada should be some nation-wide undertaking, which should provide work for each unemployed able-bodied man within a reasonable distance from his own home, and which should serve as a permanent gain to the life of the Dominion. I suggested that retaining met the requirements of such a plan like highway making. But we must go farther. It will not do to permit our industry to be reduced to the level of unskilled labor. The higher-paid, higher-skilled occupations must be protected, too. The highway project will take up the slack. It will serve as a line of retreat. It will guarantee universal employment, and the consequent universal self-supporting family condition, throughout the Dominion. Having secured that, we should go on to higher things. Having insured our population against industrial disaster we are in a position to project other undertakings which promise more wealth and comfort.

A gentleman who has thought much upon this matter, and whose knowledge of Canadian conditions is very extensive and thorough, explained in my hearing some plans for tiding over the readjustment period, which I venture to repeat. He had settled in his mind upon three things, the accomplishment of which would assist the country to find and right herself in the years immediately after the war.

The first was a vigorous building of ships. This has already gotten off to a good start. It is the one part of the Imperial munitions expenditure which may survive the signing of the articles of peace. Already, it is bringing into Canada more than a million dollars a week. It is desirable that this be not only retained, but that it be increased. For, though shrapnel shells and rifle cartridges will be no longer required after the Hun cries quit, there will still be a world-wide demand for sea transportation. The business upon great waters will suffer no diminution through peace. It may rather increase. Canada is well fitted in its natural resources for building ships. It is therefore one of our great opportunities for manufacture and export. Our seacoast cities, both on the Atlantic and Pacific, and our lakeshore cities, along the thousand miles of interior water frontier, may continue in active and prosperous employment through shipbuilding. The government should launch a courageous policy of assistance to this industry.

The second item my friend mentioned was the St. Lawrence power scheme. It is unnecessary to recapitulate the arguments on behalf of the mining of the white coal of Canada. Here is a field of ore which needs no prospecting. It is ready for development operations at any moment. Private interests have been long aware of the value of the potential water power of the St. Lawrence rapids. A huge horse-power can be attained. It is admirably situated for distribution through our own most thickly populated regions, and to the foremost manufacturing district of the United States. Doubtless, had it not been for certain difficulties in the way, this project would have been undertaken years ago. There was the need of coming to an arrangement with the government of the United States. There was the rivalry of the navigation interests. And there was the hesitation of handing over so much wealth, of the public utility species, to a private company; or, on the other hand, of embarking upon the enterprise, as a publicly-owned affair.

These difficulties have to some extent been lessened with the passage of time. And, to some extent, the pressure for their solution has been increased. It must be easier now than it was a few years since to come to an understanding with the government of the United States. It is easier now to initiate movements for public ownership and control than it used to be, for public opinion has moved rapidly towards favoring such action. And, with the gradual disappearance of these difficulties has grown the resolve that the problem between navigation rights and water-power development shall be brought to a solution.

This undertaking would provide work for an immense army of men, many of whom would be of the more skilled classes. The location of the dam would be near big population centres, making it convenient

for the work to be carried on with a minimum of domestic disturbance. It would mean the regular distribution of large amounts in wages which would work up through all the levels and departments of the social order, bringing relief and security everywhere.

The third item of my friend's programme is of quite another sort. It does not propose any national public work but a plan of shifting labor, so that when the storm breaks it may find the working people better prepared to meet it. There are a great many women temporarily employed in our factories. Doubtless many of those who have been drawn in through war conditions will expect to remain. But a great many will not. They are making this unusual effort because of the unusual conditions of the last few years, and, when the crisis is over will expect to return to their domestic duties. In any case, female labor will be the first to be released as the demand for labor changes into a demand for work. Signs of it are already apparent. Any occasional slackening of war orders has produced the discharge of women rather than of men. When the general dismissal, consequent on the end of the war, comes, the women will be the first to go. Moreover, it is well that it should be so. If a choice must be made between men at work and women at work it is far better that the men be retained. They are the larger earners, they are the responsible heads of families, and when idle there are no natural domestic duties to keep them occupied.

The proposal is, then that the women be drawn as far as possible into the munition factories, and the men into the more permanent industries. Thus when

the great cessation of contracts comes it will be the women who will be discharged, and the men continued in employment. I am not sure as to just how this policy is to be carried out, but it is palpably wise, if practicable. It would shift the centre of gravity to a safer point and help to keep the ship of labor afloat.

These three projects may well be considered by any governmental board charged with the business of heading off industrial depression. They will require, however, to make them effective, such a machinery of labor bureaus as we do not yet possess. And, the whole question of the distribution of labor makes the same demand. In normal times this is one of the clamant needs of our country. Such a system of interdependent and co-operating bureaus has proved its worth in Britain, in Belgium before the war, and in other European countries. The United States shows signs of establishing such a system. And our own government has made some move towards it. But a complete organization, covering the whole country, is needed.

The unit of labor distribution is never the Province. Our Provincial bureaus have been working under a heavy handicap for this reason. A city is a unit of a sort, and a city employment agency has a chance to accomplish something worth while far beyond that possible to a Provincial agency. Labor moves as freely across a Provincial boundary as across a county boundary. The three prairie Provinces, and the three maritime Provinces, form a natural geographical district for the movement of men seeking work, in each case. In time of seeding and harvest, the whole of Canada is combed to meet the needs of the prairies. If labor is to be efficiently distributed it must be by means of a Dominion-wide chain of labor bureaus. Of course, the Provincial bureaus, now established and in possession of knowledge and resources, may be utilized by some overhead control. But the point is that without a concatenated system of bureaus of information and direction concerning the demand for labor, extending from Sydney to Victoria, there is bound to be blundering and loss in bringing the man and the job together.

Mentioned in Despatches

F. P. JONES, another man appointed to the Government Railway Board is Vice-President and Managing Director of the Canada Cement Co., President of the Dominion Glass Co. and connected with a number of other corporations. Mr. Jones is now in Ottawa in connection with the War Trade Board. He is a native of Brockville, Ontario.

MR. JOHN W. DAVIS, Solicitor-General of the United States, has been appointed American Ambassador to Great Britain. Mr. Davis, who comes from West Virginia, is a lawyer by profession and has been prominent in the Democratic Party. He is a former member of Congress and shortly after Woodrow Wilson became President he appointed Davis, Solicitor-General for the United States.

BEN TILLET, one of England's best known labor-men and a prominent figure in parliament almost takes the place in England of Samuel Gompers in America. Tillet has rendered splendid service in urging British labor to actively support the Government, pointing out that labor in Germany has pinned its fate to the military classes. Tillet has had a varied career, serving at a time as a fisherman, then as a shoe-maker. He is an author of a number of books on Capital and Labor.

M. J. O'BRIEN, who has been called to the Dominion Senate is a man well known in the contracting world and also as a miner. Mr. O'Brien is the owner of the O'Brien mine in Cobalt, in which he amassed a fortune and is connected with a number of industrial corporations in his native town Renfrew. Mr. O'Brien is probably best known through his railroad construction work having built many sections of railroad throughout the country.

CARDINAL J. M. FARLEY, Archbishop of New York, who died a few days ago, was an Irishman by birth, but emigrated to the United States when a young man. Farley was essentially a self-made man; his father, an inn-keeper, died when he was a boy at 7; his mother also died leaving the young boy an orphan. In spite of this handicap he secured a good education and made his way to the top of the Roman Catholic church in the United States. He was 76 years of age.

MR. J. E. MARTIN, K.C., who has been elevated to the King's Bench, is one of Montreal's best known legal men. He is a native of the Eastern Townships, was educated at McGill and practised law here as a member of the firm of Foster, Martin, Mann, McKinnon & Co. Mr. Martin was created a K.C. in 1903 and ten years later was elected Batonnier of the Bar.

E. R. WOOD, who has been appointed to the Government Railway Board, is president of the Dominion Securities Corporation, director of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, and one of the foremost financial men in the Dominion. Mr. Wood began his business career as a railway telegraph operator, later becoming associated with the late Senator Cox. Through him he became identified with many important financial and industrial corporations. Mr. Wood has always been closely identified with the Mackenzie and Mann interests.

SIR GEORGE REID, who died a few days ago, in London, was formerly High Commissioner for Australia, and later member of the British Parliament for St. George's Square. Reid was born in Scotland and went to Australia as a boy, studied law, and soon became an active member of the New South Wales Assembly. He became Premier in 1894, and while Premier, was leader in the movement which eventually brought about the union of the various Australian States. He became Premier of Australia in 1904, and was appointed High Commissioner to Great Britain six years later.

THE HON. W. F. MASSEY, who visited Montreal on his way home from attending the Imperial War Cabinet is one of the outstanding men from the overseas Dominions. Massey has been Premier of New Zealand for the past seven years, after serving for twenty years in the New Zealand Parliament and leading the Opposition. As a matter of fact, Massey formed the new reform party, and for a time was its only member, later getting into power as its head. He is an Irishman by birth, and went to New Zealand when a boy of fourteen and engaged in farming. Among his friends he is known as "Old Bill."