

MINISTER PROPHESES ACTIVITY

(Continued from page 488-b)

Never in the world was there such a shortage of food as at present, and food prices must rule high for another year. This plays an important part in the prices of building materials and of everything else.

The enhanced cost of construction to-day is undoubtedly a deterrent to those wishing to engage in construction. I am not going to offer to you the solution of this problem to-day, if indeed it should ultimately prove to be a problem. I understand that you have formed certain committees to discuss these problems and I trust that arrangements will be made for various members of the government to meet your committees and receive any viewpoints that you may have as to how these problems may be solved. Everyone should assist in the solution of the many problems facing us to-day.

"In the building program," declared Mr. MacLean emphatically, "I have no hesitation in saying that governments, provincial and local, municipalities, cities and towns which have deferred construction programs should resume them at once.

"There is no restriction to-day upon the issue of securities by any government whatever, provincial or municipal, so that these representative bodies are at liberty

to go into the money markets and procure their money for construction programs, and it is the duty of all representative bodies to give a lead to the people of Canada at this moment when things are more or less confusing."

During the war we learned the value of standardization, economy, co-operation, organization and up-to-date machinery, and all that was very much needed in this country. It cannot be said that our industries were subject to criticism for lack of these forces before, for we were a very young country and we cannot look for such factors to be very prominent in the life of a young country, but if these factors which contributed so much to our war industries, be applied to the industries of peace, we cannot but benefit therefrom. I think that we might possibly absorb a great deal of the enhanced cost of construction to-day, which is more or less of a hindrance to many people in engaging in construction work to-day, by the increased efficiency and the better methods that we have learned during the war.

"We learned how to run the war while we were waging it," concluded Mr. MacLean, "and we will learn how to meet and solve our problems as the days go by, and particularly if we make up our minds that we are going to meet them successfully; and having our minds made up to that, I am sure that the future can be regarded as most hopeful and bright by everybody."

Minister of Public Works Says It Is Government's Duty to Branch Out In Building Program

REFERENCE having been made by the chairman to the fact that the Hon. Frank Carvell, Minister of Public Works, is interested in a brick manufacturing plant and therefore might be considered a member of the Association of Canadian Building and Construction Industries, Mr. Carvell carefully stated that he was not talking as a brick manufacturer when he addressed the members of the Association last Wednesday at their luncheon.

"I occupy an illogical position," said Mr. Carvell, "as I am a lawyer, and a lawyer ought to be the last man to know anything about building."

We have come now to the reconstruction period. The fact that nearly two hundred men of this Association have come here to this conference shows the seriousness of the problems in which the country is interested even more than the Government. At no previous time have we faced such great problems. Our debt has doubled and we must raise great revenues. With our enormous resources we will pull out all right, and in a year or two we will go on and grow much greater than ever before. The Government should not throw the responsibility entirely on the people, nor should the people "pass the buck" altogether to the Government.

I understand that housing has been discussed by your conference. This is a question of policy. The Government must decide this matter as a question of principle. My field is public works. Many people have asked me, "what do you propose to do to tide the country over the reconstruction period?"

For the past year we have been putting on the brakes as hard as we could, endeavoring to save all our money for war purposes and not to spend money otherwise. Now that the war is over we look at the question of public expenditures from an entirely different standpoint.

The Government is justified and is called upon to spend money on any work of economic advantage, even if the cost should be increased. We must have a much broader outlook during the coming year than we have had for the past two or three years from a building trades standpoint.

The provision of office space for the Government is a problem in every city. The amount we are paying for rented buildings throughout the Dominion is staggering. We are paying \$700,000 a year to the landlords in Ottawa alone. This shows the necessity of publicly-owned buildings. In nearly every city throughout the country we are paying in rentals much more than the interest and depreciation would amount to on suitable buildings erected for our own purposes. We cannot base the requirements exactly upon present conditions, however, as some of the officials and departments of the Government will cease to exist now that the war is over.

In practically all cities in Canada we should have our own buildings, and this will mean a large building program if the idea is adopted. We are giving it serious consideration. There will also be other public works that will employ labor.

It is our duty to branch out in a building program; our duty to see as many men as possible be employed until we get back to normal, even if such building is going to cost more money than during normal times; yes, even if it is going to cost quite a lot more money, in order to tide over the reconstruction period.

I see that you have also been discussing the question of letting public works by tender. I am a firm believer in this principle, and since becoming Minister of Public Works there have only been two contracts in that department that have not been let by public tender and to