

The Brain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, May 1, 1918

A National Stocktaking

Canada is to have a complete registration of all her available man and woman power. This announcement was made last week in the House of Commons by F. B. McCurdy, one of the members of the Canadian Registration Board. It is proposed to issue a proclamation fixing a day upon which every person over 16 years of age will be obliged to attend one of the appointed places of registration, and there answer truthfully a series of simple questions which will be set forth upon a card. These questions will ask name, address, age, place of birth, and in the case of a man, whether or not he is married, how many children he has under 16 years of age, his occupation, the kind of work for which he is best fitted by training, experience, etc. Upon completing this registration, the individual will be supplied with a certificate which must be carried on his person, and be produced at any time upon demand by a police officer or constable. The plan of operation in taking the registration will be similar to that employed for the purpose of a Dominion election. The electoral constituency will be the territorial unit, and plan of operation in taking the registration whose duty it will be to provide a sufficient number of places of registration, and to appoint for each such place a deputy and one or more assistant deputy registrars. Any person failing to register, and not having good reason for failing, will be subject to serious penalties and disfranchisement. It is announced also that this Dominion-wide registration will be complete by the end of June.

The chief aim of this scheme of national service, which promises to be in marked contrast to that abortive effort which was undertaken two years ago under the direction of R. B. Bennett, of Calgary, is to provide for productive enterprises both on the land and in the workshop and factory. One striking weakness in the proposal as submitted by Mr. McCurdy is seen in the attitude of the Registration Board towards women. Among other questions, women, it is said, will be asked in what capacity they can best serve the country, and if their circumstances would permit them to give regular full-time service without remuneration. In contrast with this demand upon women is the proposal to men. Males will be asked, it is said, whether circumstances would permit them to serve in the present national crisis by changing present occupation to some other pursuit for which they might be qualified, provided the conditions offered were satisfactory.

While the spirit of this scheme of national registration will appeal to loyal Canadians everywhere, there is no doubt that strong exception will be taken, in the West at any rate, to the suggestion of parsimoniousness and discrimination contained in the proposed demands upon women workers. The women who register ought not to be asked to give their services without remuneration, and it is pretty safe to say that, before Mr. McCurdy's plan is made law, they will not be exposed to that bit of effrontery. Taken all in all, however, the government's program of national registration ought to produce information which will lead to the mobilization and utilization of Canada's resources promptly and efficiently.

Britain's Example in Finance

The recent budget speech of Mr. Bonar Law, the Chancellor of the British Exchequer, giving the estimated expenditures and revenues of the United Kingdom for the ensuing financial year, surely was one of the most direct rebukes that could have been delivered to those who, like Industrial Canada in its April issue, believe that "all the pleas and pretexts of free trade have gone down under the strain of war." Never in the world's history has a budget containing an estimated annual expenditure of \$15,000,000,000 been submitted to any people. And never was there a people more able to bear that stupendous burden, and in the bearing of it, more philosophical, than they who inhabit the brave, free islands of Britain.

With increased expenditures on account of the war, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer seeks additional income for the nation, got through indirect taxation in the form of customs' duties, or by means of embargoes on manufactured or other goods imported into the country. Great Britain will raise over \$4,000,000,000 in taxes this year, or more than \$94 per head, by direct levies upon incomes and luxuries. Equity is the characteristic of the British system of taxation. It bears heaviest upon those who are best able to pay taxes. Thus we see heavy super-taxes being imposed upon incomes ranging upward from \$12,500 per annum. Where income and profits' taxes do not effect the people of England, the other taxes on non-essential articles of food, on luxuries and on tobacco and spirits apply broadly. The free trade policy of the motherland still stands strongly vindicated. It leaves the working classes in a position where they have a chance to live under the pressure of the times, and also pay their share of taxation without unfairness or undue hardship. The Canadian government which will present its budget this week will do well to take a leaf from the book of Britain in forming plans for increased revenue.

War Boom in Land

The activity in western farm lands has really developed in many districts into a "boom," and transactions are being reported these days at prices which have had no parallel in the history of the country. Big cash amounts are also figuring in the deals which invariably are being made with wealthy men from the United States. In Southern Alberta recently, 1,700 acres, only partially improved, sold for \$106,000 to a man from Kansas, while from Saskatchewan comes the report of the sale of a half-section near the little town of Sedley, for some \$14,000, and a whole section near Colfax, for \$37,000. These are just examples of many transactions which are occurring in all parts of the West at the present time. The increased interest of people from the south in Western Canada, coupled with the world-wide demand for cereal production, has undoubtedly placed the good arable districts of the prairie provinces at a marked premium for the time being.

In the face of this unquestioned and valuable development in many quarters of the West, The Guide takes the opportunity to express warning lest the established districts throughout the country should be seized with the old-time fever of speculation.

If the present influx of buyers of land from the other side of the line were to induce amongst the older settlers who are already placed satisfactorily and prosperously on their farms, unrestrained desire for exchange and profit, the country as a whole would be subjected to a peril far greater than that which attended the period of speculation in town and city lots a few years ago. The price of grain to-day, raised to two or three times its normal value by the war, is giving the impetus to the present big business in farm lands. But it should be remembered that with the conclusion of the war, the values of wheat, oats, flax and other grains are liable to decline much more rapidly than it will be possible to adjust the value of land to lower levels. It ought also to be remembered that before the war there was a doubt in many minds as to the profit of growing wheat under conditions which prevailed in Western Canada. It will not pay in the long run to permit the element of inflation to enter into the value of agricultural land in these profitable days of the war.

Supporting this view, we take pleasure in quoting the advice of G. R. Marnoch, president of the Lethbridge Board of Trade, as contained in his recently-published annual report. He says: "Notwithstanding the profitable showings from farm operations during the past three years there are quite sufficient reasons in sight to preclude any great increase in the prices for farm lands devoted chiefly to grain-raising. The dry seasons of 1910 and 1914 are not forgotten, and it is remembered that there were many difficult weather conditions in 1911, 1912, and 1913. The outlook as to after-war prices for grain is not by any means clear. The present conditions and the immediate outlook makes well-established farmers quite content to decline what might otherwise look to be good offers for their holdings, and they are devoting their profits to improving their home surroundings, increasing their livestock, production and generally making their plans for permanent and comfortable settlement."

Tax-Free Bonds

One of the outstanding features of the British budget, which was brought down in the Imperial House of Commons last week, was the announcement regarding tax-free bonds. Mr. Bonar Law, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave notice that in future, bonds cannot be issued with a provision for exemption from taxation. This is of particular interest to Canada. Our Victory Loan issue of last autumn provided every investor with exemption from the federal income tax, and bond houses in the East as recently as March have advertised this fact widely as an additional inducement to investment by capital. The tax-free war bond most certainly gives the man with money a free course in the evasion of income taxes. For example, the millionaire might very easily invest \$500,000 in Canadian Victory Bonds of 1917 issue, yielding almost six per cent. per annum in interest. This would give him an income of some \$30,000 dollars per year, and not a cent of taxation could be collected from it.

The principle of exempting war bonds from the application of the income tax, in the final analysis is pernicious, and should be treated in Canada as Bonar Law handled it in Britain. No person should be presented with a polite bribe to invest money in the