

## What of the Night?

### How will the War Affect Social Conditions? The Slump in Social Welfare Work

By J. W. MACMILLAN, D. D.

I have been trying for some time to forecast the condition of Canada after the war from the point of view of one whose chief interest is in social welfare. I have read with careful attention a number of pronouncements by able public men as to the events which are likely to transpire in that period. Most of these, naturally enough are concerned with "business." They are conceived in terms of growth of population, of investment and production. Only incidentally are such things as the distribution of wealth, the comfort of the average family and the salvage of the less fit considered. And, even so, they seem to me to be colored by the emotionalism which the war has created. The presage of victory stir in them. They carry forward the "hopes too far to turn out false," and project the relief and triumph of peace restored into the years of reaction and reconstruction.

#### The Lesson of History.

I have particularly noted, in these pronouncements, an attempt to draw analogies from similar eras in the past. The consequences of the Napoleonic wars and of the civil war in the United States are to be read in many current works of history. Surely these have something to say to us at such a time as this. And though history never repeats itself in exact detail, it is in the careful and discriminating study of such events as we possess rather than in attempts at sheer vaticination, however sagacious, that the true method of approach to this problem lies.

It is clear, I think, that we are in for a period of social reaction. The conservatives, the stand-patters and the high Tories, will have their place in the sun, while the progressives, reformers and radicals will suffer eclipse. The movements for the improvement of the conditions of life among the common people, which had gained great strength in many countries and were invading Canada will be halted. We shall have to wait till a generation passes away and another comes before they gather strength again.

The forces of reaction ruled England for a generation after Waterloo. It is the darkest period of the social and industrial history of modern England. Human life and labor were exploited in such a pitiless fashion as, thank God, will not occur again. All that seemed to survive of the French Revolution was a horror of the mention of the rights of men.

The years immediately after the civil war in the United States displayed the worst political and financial blundering and wrong doing in the Republic's career.

#### Effort and Fatigue.

One reason for this state of things is the inevitable exhaustion of the human spirit after prolonged and intense strain. Peter's denial of his Lord followed close upon his single-handed assault upon a band of soldiers. The restraint of London during many weary months burst into a debauch when Mafeking was relieved. The law of rhythm applies to the human will as well as to human muscles. Effort is followed by fatigue, and fatigue induces the cessation from effort. When the prodigious strain of the present war is relaxed the national disposition will not be to plunge at once into another struggle. The forces of privilege and possession and tradition are always hard fighters. They do not attack, because they already possess the lion's share. If left alone they go on consolidating their holdings in a quiet way. But they spring to arms if a gun is pointed at them. The tendency will be, after the fury and havoc of the war is over, not to hunt for trouble for a while. There will be less demand for social reconstruction, more acquiescence in things as they are.

Another reason is found in the changed composition of the population. The older men will be in the majority. Many of the younger men will have been killed, and many of those who return will have come back broken in body and in spirit. Even those who entirely escape the hazards of battle will find themselves fitting awkwardly into the places they used to fill. They will have changed and the places will have changed. Now, the contest between progress and tradition is largely a contest between youth and age. Youth is going to be heavily handicapped during the next generation.

#### The Increase of Large Fortunes.

A further reason is found in the increase of large fortunes during war time. The first money magnates

of the United States were made by transactions in war supplies. We have had a peep into the profits of munition makers in Canada through the generous gift of the Canadian Cartridge Company of Hamilton, Ontario. The surplus profits there were nearly \$800,000 on a million shells. The other munition makers have retained their profits. One can surmise how rapidly some men are growing rich at the present time. Capital is always timid of reforms. It constantly stipulates that changes shall be sane. A labor leader is to it a "paid agitator." The one sacred thing in its temple is the rights of property. On the whole, the power of these new fortunes will be aligned against new ventures in social reform.

#### The Burdened of Debt

Add to these reasons the additional one arising from the repayment of the debts incurred by the war. Our Dominion has escaped the ruin which devastated the regions where the conflict was waged. Our cities have not been demolished nor our railways smashed to pieces. We shall not have to rebuild but we shall have none the less to repay. There is no escape from that. It is true, also, that we are accustomed to pay our taxes by indirect methods, through excise, customs and the like. By this means we do not know that we pay taxes. But we know that we pay out money, or if we never knew it before we shall hereafter know it. And we shall have to pay a great deal every year. The average income will be heavily assessed, or, in other words, the cost of living will be higher. The poor will be poorer, and the well-to-do not so well off. Only the few rich, to whom the expense of living is negligible, will have profited.

It is hard to envisage the dislocation of business when the munition contracts run out and the soldiers come off the pay list, when factories close and the veterans of the trenches have to look for work. Perhaps the readjustment may be accomplished with comparative smoothness. But in any case the very

pressure of the problem of readjustment will divert attention from the usual problems of social welfare. Health and housing and the labor of women and children will be pushed aside by the insistent need of preventing processions of the out-of-works on the streets.

It is not to be expected that this period of reaction will be undisturbed. The unprivileged and their abettors are too well organized and have been already too successful not to continue their crusading. And several things in the national war experience will help them.

#### The Tides of Sympathy.

The tides of sympathy which have been set loose by the war will continue to flow. Pity will be more potent and justice will speak with more authority. The rights of men will count for more and the rights of things for less. Altruism will be quite respectable for a time and conscience will not be so easily sneered out of court. Both mothers and the sons of mothers will indulge other dreams than those of purely material success as the goal of a young man's career. The get-rich-quick artist will be less highly honored.

Besides, and of the utmost importance, is the fact that many families have tasted the delights of a living wage. Thousands of Canadian homes, through the man of the house having donned khaki have for the first time realized a decent and comfortable plan of living. People are extremely tenacious of their standards of living. We may be sure that they will not drop back to the lower level without resistance. One can read this resolve in the recent resolutions of the British Labor Congress. There will be the same disposition in Canada to preserve the higher standard with all it means in additional comfort, self-respect, security, freedom from care and even social position. The disposition will powerfully disturb and possibly mitigate the reaction towards conservatism in social welfare movements.

So will it be, as I judge, immediately after the war. But only immediately after. Far better things will come when the generation bred in the straitness and penury of the reaction comes to maturity. After all, a generation is not long in the history of the world. A generation is not so long to wait for the harvest the seed of which is the blood of the soldiers who are fighting to-day. Our children will reap what they have sown.

## Newfoundland Trade Notes

### Fisheries' Returns Poor --- New Industrial Projects in View.

(Special Correspondence to Journal of Commerce.)

It now looks as if we were going to have one of the shortest fisheries on record. The Lobster fishery will not reach 11,000 cases; and the prevailing price—\$16 per case—will not leave a very satisfactory margin to the fishermen, as all supplies for the industry have been higher by fifty per cent. than in former years. Ten years ago this fishery was valued at \$400,000; but it has been steadily decreasing ever since. The Board of Trade will recommend a close season, it is said; and this will be endorsed by the Fishery Commission. Otherwise it is feared that the industry is doomed to extinction as our whale fishery was owing to overfishing. We had thirteen whaling plants in operation ten years ago, with an output valued at \$425,000. Now there is one; and this is located on the coast of Labrador.

#### Pit Props.

Less than twelve months ago we were very enthusiastic about the "new industry" which was then being launched, viz.,—the exportation of pit-props to England. Several city merchants and others plunged into the business visioning a financial bonanza. Some hundreds of men were employed during the winter in the northern bays cutting props; and 200,000 cords were prepared for shipment. Now there is wailing and weeping among the speculators; a sufficient number of bottoms cannot be secured to market the cut. Several shipments have gone out recently; but it is estimated that fully 100,000 cords will remain on the hands of the contractors until next season. The northern Bays will be closed to navigation towards the end of December; and there will be no possible means of shipping props until next May, or June.

#### Trade Conditions.

Business has been exceptionally dull for the past two weeks; and the city stores report very small receipts. There is little outport trade as few people are shipping their early fish. City buyers are now

sending agents to the nearby settlements to purchase cargoes; but the fishermen are not disposed to sell at the price offered. There is a feeling abroad that fish must advance very soon as the quantity in sight is not large. Formerly, when the credit system was in vogue, dealers in the outports had to deliver their product nilly willy; but, as most of them now buy their supplies in the Spring, fish buyers must produce the cash. The trade in oils is also very dull; and there are few offerings. Refiners are holding their oils for an advance. Our business men cannot understand the oil market; and few of them are disposed to stock large quantities. Recent quotations—\$1.25 for medicinal—mean disaster to the refiners, as they paid from 35 to 40 cents per gallon for cod livers.

#### Commodities.

The sensational advance in flour which occurred recently has caused much anxiety among the fishermen, as nearly all of them purchase a six months stock at the end of the fishing season. The market is fairly well supplied for present needs; and large shipments will come in within the next month. We understand that some of the larger firms had bought for September delivery before the flour market began to soar; but this does not mean that our toilers will get the benefit of the deal.

Prices in all commodities are stiffening; and in many instances without any justification. Our working class find it difficult to make the two ends meet, though wages have advanced. They find that the purchasing power of a dollar is fully forty per cent. less than it was two years ago.

#### Industrial Notes.

Work is progressing rapidly on the plant of the Newfoundland-American Packing Company, at Bay Bulls, and it is hoped to have some phases of its program in operation by September. This year's

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In view of the war loan and tificable means haps be worth of the method. In the first p Dominion shou bute according success of the not allow him the idea that banks, the bor see the loan t responsibility corporations a feel the neces The best resul efforts take th penditures so purchasing wa well-to-do thes likely be in ev taken surely f biles, or very and the like, a entertainments this kind a w tional \$1,000, thus benefitin great cause of

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