

BRITISH COLUMBIA FINANCIAL TIMES

A Journal of Finance, Commerce, Insurance, Real Estate, Timber and Mining

Vol. V. No. 24

VANCOUVER, DECEMBER 21, 1918

SINGLE COPY 10c
THE YEAR \$2.00

Demobilization and Problem of Unemployment

Review of World Conditions, as Reflected on Canada, Shows that, if Agencies of Reconstruction Can Be Set Going, Unemployment Will Be Nil.

Considerable concern is frequently heard in business circles over future problems of unemployment that will occur when the army of 400,000 is returned to civil life in Canada. It is generally felt that unemployment will be a very serious problem, and that it will be necessary for the Government to undertake great public improvements, employing large numbers in order to relieve the congestion which will be created, and to obviate all the evils that are connected with unemployment of wide extent.

Viewing the entire situation from a world and a Canadian point of view, much of the concern seems to be without foundation. What would occasion a great unemployment problem would be a collapse of prices, and this does not appear to be imminent. While it is undoubtedly true that prices are high and must yield from their present level, it must still be kept firmly in mind that there is a huge shortage of commodities which will operate against any marked depression in prices until the actual consumptive demands are more nearly being filled. The present juncture calls for stability of conditions as a prime essential. If some degree of stability can be maintained which, so far as can be seen, will occur with gradual reduction in costs as readjustment proceeds, then the problem of unemployment will remain as a remote contingency rather than a potential menace.

Viewed from an international angle, thirty million men have been turned from productive industry to destruction of industry and life. Not only has life and property been destroyed, but the energies of these men have been withdrawn from the needs of production and industry and their consumption of material has been so huge that voids and vacancies are the outstanding mark of the present day. Apart from the considerations of increase in population at

a conservative estimate five million men will no longer take part in the industrial life of the state. The world-wide situation is this: There is an acute shortage of labor and an acute shortage of materials in the world. The ranks of labor must be increased to make up for this shortage in commodities.

From the point of view of Canada, we have been, through immigration, adding to our population from overseas and from across the Line a number of people ranging from 150,000 to 400,000 per annum, of which it is probably safe to say that forty per cent. are wage earners. If this be the normal condition during the past two decades, the addition of an army of 400,000 to the ranks of industry would not be such a heavy peace problem in itself. But an army of 400,000 cannot, under the conditions of demobilization, be returned to Canada in one year. The most ambitious attempt at demobilization calls for 20,000 per month, and this 20,000 is to be returned to civilian life at all centres in Canada and not congested at the ports of Halifax or Montreal.

We do not know how far the plans of the Dominion Government for placing soldiers on the land have proceeded, but, in a recent report from a canvass of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces made public of 230,000 men questioned on the point, 105,000 asserted that they wished to become farmers after the war. The actual number of the

returned will be larger than 230,000 but it is reasonable to suppose that the percentage will remain constant. Quite a remarkable feature of this report lies in the fact that 78,000 of this 105,000 have had agricultural experience and 61,000 of these men have worked on farms for three years or more and that 41,000 were engaged in farming at the time of entering service. If this be any indication of the trend, the land departments of the Dominion and every province will be busy finding locations and proper conditions for properly placing these men on the land.

The Dominion has placed orders in the steel ship-building industry contemplating operations for at least

What better Christmas Present could be made to your son, daughter, young relative or young friend than a War Savings Stamp? For the small sum of four dollars, which will be redeemed on January first, 1924, at five dollars, a young person may be started on the way of thrift. The scheme provided by the Dominion Government affords the opportunity of saving as small a sum as twenty-five cents by the purchase of a Thrift Stamp, and it affords the greatest object lesson in thrift and saving that can be devised.