

MILITARY HOSPITALS COMMISSION.

To the Editor:

In your issue dated December 1st, under the heading—"The Returned Soldier Problem," you indicated an interest in the vocational training of returned soldiers. Enclosed herewith you will find an article containing information which it seems readers of the previous article should have in their possession in order to form full judgment on the questions raised.

Yours faithfully,

C. NORMAN SENIOR,
Publicity Representative.

Under Order-in-Council power has been given the Military Hospitals Commission to train for new occupations returned sailors and soldiers disabled in such way that they cannot re-engage in their former work. Thus a miner with an arm off, a blacksmith with spinal injury or a textile factory employee with tuberculosis is clearly entitled to be taught a new method of earning his living.

Over 35,000 men have been returned from overseas for various causes. Of these between 17,000 and 18,000 required further medical treatment in Canada, and were assigned to institutions under the management of the Military Hospitals Commission.

A procedure for ascertaining whether or not a wounded or invalided soldier is capable of returning to his old trade has been established. Improvements in the procedure have been made several times until now it is considered to be impossible for any man returning to Canada in need of re-education to be overlooked.

A standing order exists that every convalescent soldier must be interviewed by the vocational officer of the Military Hospitals Commission Command unit, to which he is attached, and a form made out. This form constitutes a complete survey of the man from the industrial standpoint.

When the form is reviewed, and it appears from the information therein that a man is likely to need re-education, he is interviewed by a vocational counsellor and a medical officer, whose duty it is to consider the line of industry for which his aptitudes, previous training and remaining abilities qualify him. Their report goes before a committee known as a Disabled Soldier's Training Board, which consists of the district vocational officer, a medical officer and a man preferably drawn from the branch of industry which it would appear is most interested in this man's vocational future, but in every case, a man acquainted with local industrial conditions. Sometimes after a board has been sitting it is thought wise to seek the advice of a man connected with some other line of trade or industry, and the board in such cases always does so. This board, after an interview with the soldier, makes the selection of the course of training to be given.

The foregoing outlines the method of the procedure for awarding courses of re-education. On January 2nd, the last date to which figures have been compiled, the records of the Commission showed that courses of re-education had been assigned to 1,777 returned men, approximately ten per cent of those who have passed through the Commission's hands. Other figures indicate that of the number of men entering the Commission's institutions at the present time, only about eight per cent are in need of re-education.

Before the present procedure for awarding courses was completely developed soldiers possibly eligible for re-education and in need of it may have been discharged. Indeed, in the very early days there can be no doubt that such opportunities as are available for those returning now were not available.

The Commission has decided that these shall not be overlooked. An opportunity for vocational re-education is open to every returned soldier who comes within the order-in-council—that is, who is so disabled that he cannot work at his old trade. The vocational training branch is at the present time searching all back files and in conference with the Pensions Board is making a thorough canvass so that every man who was not fully interviewed in regard to his possible need for re-education, may have the opportunity presented to him. A personal letter is being sent to every discharged soldier who has not been so interviewed, explaining to him what the country is willing to do. In addition, where it appears from the man's file, that there is an obvious possibility of his needing re-education,

ROAD BUILDING URGED BY AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF HIGHWAY OFFICIALS.

The American Association of State Highway Officials held its annual meeting in Richmond, Va., on December 6. This association, which is composed of highway commissioners and engineers passed the following resolutions, which are of particular interest at the present time to Canadian road authorities because of the strong movement for the better maintenance of our own highways, roads and streets:

"We believe that while every effort of every industry and occupation must be first directed towards carrying this war to an early and successful end, nevertheless the prosecution of highway work is essential, both as a war measure and that the adoption by the nation, by the states, or by other municipalities, of a policy of half-hearted prosecution of highway work would be an irreparable blunder. We recommend to the several states, care in the selection of improvements so that there shall be first improved those roads of the greatest economic value in the present crisis. From developments so far, it seems inevitable that the present means of transportation will become utterly inadequate and must be supplemented by motor transportation over the main arteries and every step must be taken to put these arteries in condition to take and to withstand this traffic."

"Especially do we commend to all Highway Officials an intensive program of maintenance. Roads which have been built must be saved, and we trust that the Executive Committee will use every effort to insure that the National authorities give especial consideration to the movement of all materials to be used in maintenance."

"We recommend that in the present emergency, all convicts and other prisoners, the harmlessly insane, war prisoners, and alien enemies be used in so far as possible in industry and in road construction and urge legislation to this end."

"We recommend to all Highway Departments a campaign of education and publicity so that all the people may be fully informed of the necessity, particularly at this time, of continuing a sane program of road construction, and intensified maintenance and of the important place these matters have in the program of prosecuting the war."

EARL GREY—A LAST WORD.

A piece of literary news which has for Canadians an almost national significance is the announcement of the forthcoming publication of Earl Grey's last message to the Empire. At a time when even the most devoted and unselfish of statesmen might be pardoned for thinking only of his approaching end and his private affairs, Earl Grey summoned his failing energies to utter a final word in support of the ideals to which he had devoted his life. This message has been given to the world through Mr. Harold Begbie, the well known novelist and man of letters, who was for some years intimately associated with the late Earl Grey. The work will be published by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., Toronto.

a personal interviewer will be sent out to find him and if necessary bring him before a Disabled Soldier's Training Board. This field work is being done in geographical sub-divisions.

While it is true that some Canadian returned soldiers may have been overlooked for the reasons given above, Canada has done proportionately better than most other countries.

It is now well known that a discharged soldier who has not completed his course of re-education, receives from the Military Hospitals Commission paymaster a monthly pay cheque for the support of himself and his family. This will apply also to soldiers already discharged who may come back for re-education.

The fullest co-operation of all people who may know of soldiers coming within the class above described is requested by the Military Hospitals Commission in order that their needs may be brought to the attention of the vocational officers. Every discharged soldier who believes that he is entitled to re-education should apply either to the nearest branch office of the Commission in person, or should write to the Vocational Secretary at Ottawa.