

## Preaching and Practice

ON Thursday evening Sir Thomas White, Minister of Finance, in the course of an excellent address before the Ottawa Board of Trade on the need for economy and thrift, said:

"The solution of the problems presented on demobilization of our soldiers, and arising from the need of increasing agricultural and other production, and of transportation by land and sea for our products, will, of course, require future financing on the part of the Dominion, but apart from these and the construction of the most necessary public undertakings the policy for the Dominion, provinces and municipalities should be that of rigid economy. It will be good for us financially and morally."

Sir Thomas has at several places delivered addresses along the same lines, all of which are deserving of commendation. There can be no question that the advice he gives respecting the need for economy is sound.

What a pity it is that such excellent advice is weakened by the fact that at Ottawa, under the eyes of Sir Thomas and his colleagues, and with the concurrence of a Joint Committee of Parliament, the existence of which is calculated to stifle discussion, there is going on a work, the cost of which will run into millions, which cannot by any possibility be properly described as a "most necessary public undertaking." How can the Government expect lessons of economy from any Minister to be received with respect while there is going on the scandalous waste that is involved in the reconstruction of the Parliament Buildings at such a time as this? Of course Canada must have, at the proper time, Parliament Buildings which will be in keeping with the character of the Dominion. But there is hardly anything that Canada has less need of at this time than a new Parliament House. In the Victoria Memorial Museum at Ottawa Parliament has found convenient and comfortable quarters. There are large rooms which are well suited to the purposes of the Senate and House of Commons. Indeed, in some respects the accommodation now enjoyed by the members of the two bodies is better than it was in the stately structure on Parliament Hill that was recently destroyed by fire. There is quite a large amount of accommodation for committees and for the members. It is not all that could be desired, but it is ample for war-time, when some inconvenience and perhaps discomfort have to be borne by everybody. If Parliament has to be housed in its present quarters for several years nobody will be the worse for it. Why then should the Government, at a time when the recruiting offices are almost empty, when the Ottawa battalions call in vain for their complement of men, set hundreds of able bodied men at work for the rebuilding of structures not needed? With what reason can the Government refuse the call for public buildings in other parts of Canada while this wasteful expenditure of millions goes on under their eyes at Ottawa? The actual work of erection is suspended on account of the weather, but the work of preparing the material is going on as usual. All such work done at the present time of high wages will be very costly. That alone would be a reason for delay until a more convenient season. The need of men for military service is another reason. The need there will be for after-the-war work, to furnish employment at a time when it will be much needed, is another reason and a very strong one.

Ministers should make a more serious effort

to practice the excellent doctrine they are preaching. To proceed with the reconstruction of the Parliament Buildings at this time is folly and worse. If Sir Thomas White will require the Public Works Department to stop this wasteful expenditure he will add much force to his excellent speeches on national and individual thrift.

## The Hunger of Germany

THE Wall Street Journal several weeks ago had a short article, which we reproduced, stating that the humble potato was likely to be a very important factor in the questions of war and peace. The potato crop, valuable in Germany at all times, has been of particular importance during the war. Potatoes are largely used in Germany as food for animals. For human food, besides the ordinary use as vegetables, potatoes have been treated to produce a flour which has been extensively used as a substitute for wheat flour in breadmaking. And now there is an alarming shortage of potatoes.

The Wall Street writer's appreciation of that fact is fully confirmed by an eminent English writer, Mr. Francis Gribble, who has contributed to the London Sunday Pictorial a striking article on the situation in Germany. Reduced, he says, to about a quarter of a pound of meat and a couple of ounces or so of butter or oleomargarine a week the Germans need their potatoes badly. Of the general food outlook, and particularly the potato shortage, Mr. Gribble writes:

"A potato famine, therefore, means for them pretty much what it meant for Ireland in the hungry forties. And a potato famine is imminent in Germany."

"The yield of the potato harvest of 1916 is a little more than one-third and a little less than two-fifths of the yield of 1915; and even in 1915 there were barely enough potatoes to meet the demand. Not long ago the weekly allowance was 10-lb. per head. Now it is only 3½-lb. per head—the ration being supplemented by turnips; and, in order to provide even that scanty dole, it has been found necessary to forbid the use of potato flour by the bakers."

"Further restrictions will almost certainly be necessary before very long, for a considerable proportion of the potatoes actually harvested were carelessly stored and have been destroyed by the early frosts. Altogether there is a greater loss here than is at all likely to be made good by the spoliation of the granaries in the occupied regions of Rumania."

"Unquestionably the German Government feels the need of setting itself right with those of its own people who protest that glory does not satisfy their appetites, and that the war is being kept going in order that Junkers may make fortunes out of the high prices of agricultural produce. The alarm felt in financial circles at the fall of the mark, now at a discount of nearly 40 per cent., may be a further factor."

"But these are subsidiary reasons. The main reason is hunger, and the conviction that the hunger will get worse and worse as the winter advances, and that even if Germany can survive the winter—which is doubtful—the harvests will continue to be worse and worse until the war is over."

"These things are bound to happen. There will be no more jam in Germany, because there is no more sugar. The supply of live stock cannot be increased for lack of

fodder. The light soil of Germany depends for its productivity on the liberal use of artificial manure; and it is more than two years since the Chilean nitrates ceased to be imported. Even natural manure is scarce, owing to the paucity of horses and cattle. The prospects, in short, are such that Germany must have peace at an early date or perish. That is the inwardness of the Kaiser Note; and that is the reason why Berlin hung out the flags, as if for a victory on hearing of it."

All available information from Germany confirms the impression that the pinch of hunger is being felt very severely. In Austria too the situation is similar. A large portion of the Austrian people, under their best conditions, live close to the hunger line. Their situation under the pressure of the war must involve much hardship and discontent. It is, no doubt, the full knowledge of all this that has led the new sovereign of the Dual Monarchy to make his appeal to the Pope to endeavor to secure peace. The world is informed of the splendor with which the coronation of King Charles took place at Budapest. The Austrian and Hungarian courts are fond of pomp and ceremony and these things will not be neglected in the proceedings connected with the advent of the new Emperor-King. But the very story of the splendid pageants of the coronation will be sad reading for the suffering masses of the people.

The evidence of the economic pressure upon the Central Powers is too general and too strong to be disregarded. The pinch of hunger and the conviction of ultimate military disaster are the things that move the Kaiser and his allies to so much talk of peace. But they will, for a time at least, keep up the conflict in the hope that something may happen, not to give them victory, for that they must know cannot come, but to furnish them with opportunity to obtain peace on some more favorable terms than those which have been set forth by the Entente Allies. There will, in the meantime, be desperate fighting on their part on the land, a revival of submarine atrocities and perhaps some attempted raids by the bottled up German navy. Peace may be thus in sight, though only in the dim distance. The most certain thing is that that peace will come the sooner if Great Britain and her Allies continue to put into the great war all the resources of the British Empire and of the other nations which are sharing with us the burden and the honor of protecting civilization against German domination.

## Where Labor Leaders Should Lead

Some of the leaders of our labor organizations in various parts of the Dominion have been suspicious of the purpose of the National Service cards now being distributed throughout the country. They have been disposed to believe that the distribution of cards must be in contemplation of conscription for military service, to which the labor organizations are very strongly opposed, and therefore some of the organizations have been unwilling to co-operate in the supplying of the information which the cards call for. Whatever labor leaders may feel about that phase of National Service, they have an opportunity now of participating in a national war movement to which they can hardly have any objection. The small savings proposal of the Government is one that should have unanimous support, and one that should commend itself particularly to the various trade unions of the country.