

Some Features of National Service

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By

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In these times, there is no difficulty in finding a subject upon which to address any audience in the British Empire, in fact these strenuous times offer ample material for addresses before any group of individuals in any part of what we were once pleased to term the civilized world. Nevertheless, it seems impossible to fix on any subject without being forced to touch upon this world holocaust into which we have been plunged during the past two years. At times, I am forced to feel that Bret Harte unconsciously sensed the truth when in levity he asked:

*"Is our civilization a failure?
Or is the Caucasian played out?"*

When your Honorary Secretary was good enough to convey to me the invitation of your Executive to appear before you at one of your club luncheons, I therefore did not hesitate to accept, because I felt it would be an easy matter to fix upon some subject in which I could in a measure interest you for the few moments one is expected to speak at these functions. And, as a matter of fact, it was my desire to say a few words in public upon the movement in which the Right Honourable Sir George Foster was at that time deeply interested. Hearing, however, that he was to address you at, I believe, your opening meeting of the present Club season, and expecting that he would deal with preparedness for after the war problems, I concluded to stand aside for the time being. The subject is of such outstanding importance that I feel it cannot be brought too often to our attention. It is linked up to national service. What is national service? It is the opposite of that extreme individualism which has been running rampant in recent years. It is true that each one of us should strike a balance—placing on one side what Canada has done for us and on the other what we are doing for Canada—I do not mean the generous giving of wealth alone, but that more potent factor—the use of our brains in furthering the country's good, especially in a time like this when the ball is at our feet. May I further express it this way—while we seem to be prolific wasters on this continent, efficiency was understood fully two hundred years before the time of Nero—that Nero who fiddled, and burned, and wasted. It is traceable back to the time of Euclid whose method of reasoning has not been improved upon down through the Christian era. Euclid appeared to be charged, as no man since, with the idea that we assemble our facts—our opportunities—and what we wish to determine, otherwise expressed, our ambitions—then he proceeds in a scientific way to use facts or opportunities to obtain the desired results. Now, gentlemen, have we as citizens any ambition other than for our individual advancement—have we any collective ambition for the advancement of the State? When we have, then we will have enrolled ourselves in national service.

Preparedness is no new subject. It was preached nineteen hundred years ago, and in language that cannot be equalled in effectiveness today. You remember the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. How the former had their lamps trimmed and filled with oil. They were prepared and theirs was the reward.

As you are aware, in the early part of June last, the Minister of Trade and Commerce issued what is known as his "Call to Action." It was a message freighted with importance to the people of Canada. It was based upon

the fact that we are in the midst of a great world crisis, greater the world has never seen, and that the pendulum has swung away out into space—far from its ordinary oscillations, far beyond any point it has ever approached before, and that of necessity it must return, and during the period following this war pass to the other extreme before adjusting itself again to its ordinary movements, indicating the fat and lean periods to be found in a cycle of years with the world in a normal condition.

Sir George Foster, in his "Call to Action" substantially took the position that Canada's business is made up of the aggregate of the individual businesses within Canada, and that those men responsible for the country's industry are best fitted to say what should be done and how it should be done, so as to put our house in order for the unprecedented conditions that must of necessity follow the ultra-abnormal situation in which we find ourselves today. It was his desire, as clearly stated in his "call to action," that our business men should seriously take up the country's business problems, seriously engage in a study of them, as well as of the opportunities promised by the new era which must follow the war. In other words, he wished them to get together in units of industries, to study, and study, and study, and then to come forward in convention and give the Government through him their best judgment as to what Canada should be doing now—not tomorrow, so as to make some adequate preparation for the future.

No one will question the right of Sir George Foster to call upon citizens of Canada to give the country the best that is in them in this period of peril. Did I say peril? What evidence have we of any peril? We would require something stronger than those binoculars of which we heard so much in Ottawa shortly after the opening of the war, in order to make out any sign of peril on this continent. On the contrary, all evidences are those of prosperity, and unbridled prosperity at that. The country's financial statements show it from time to time; it is to be seen on our streets—everywhere.

It is the old story of Thomas, the doubting apostle, who had to see to believe. In other words, we must break through the ice before we can be made to realize the danger. And yet, are we not one of the participants in this struggle? Belgium, our ally, likewise is one. I am not going to recount what has happened in Belgium, or to many of her women and children, but perhaps the Hun would be more considerate of our women and children if he got loose amongst us. Perhaps!

Let us return then to Sir George Foster's proposed convention and follow it through to the finish. Because it is interesting as throwing a side light on one of the weaknesses in our democracy. First, was there any need for an investigation and study of the country's industries? I believe we must all admit there was, and there still is. In the decade preceding this war, our prosperity was handed to us through loans of millions of money by Europe for the building of the country's plant. Today, it is war orders causing every wheel in the country to be speeded up to its utmost limit, resulting in the flooding of the country with money drawn from the sacrifices of Europe. Tomorrow, when peace is declared, what is to be? Aye, that is the question that Sir George Foster was deeply concerned about, and it is a question we should be grappling with now, or do we prefer the cold plunging through the thin ice of unpreparedness which will be our fate unless we wake up to a realization of our position?

Now, Gentlemen, I am only stating what has been said quite frequently. It has become a commonplace, almost, may I say, as much as the preaching of the Gospels, so vital to humanity.

My connection with the proposed convention was through a request from the Minister of Trade and Commerce, who, when leaving for England early last summer, asked me to stimulate in every possible manner interest in his "Call to Action." At once, let me confess, that I know little about the trade and commerce of Canada. That, however, did not preclude me from trying to bring together the men who do know something about it. It has, I am aware, a political side, linked up with the tariff. It has also, however, something more fundamental than that, and represented by that hackneyed phrase, economy and efficiency. Without going into the methods adopted, beyond saying that an effort was made to interest the press in the movement, I may as well confess that I absolutely failed. Allowing a friend of mine to glance through the notes of this address, he questioned the propriety of my making such an admission. He said, "You may have sown a few fruitful seeds. Furthermore, do not lose sight of the fact that the public have little regard for men who fail." Gentlemen, I am of the opinion that the time is here when men appreciate those who have the courage to admit even failure.* Well, what did I find? All busy, busy, busy—some concerned about our rapidly growing tax-load, knowing that they will be severely hit in the future—a few willing to take up the subject, others indifferent, or, worse still—unwilling. Some wished to know what machinery Sir George Foster had created to carry through the movement; what money he had set apart for the work. These questions merely indicated a most imperfect knowledge of the situation. If the civil authorities call out the public to help to cope with a great conflagration, are we going to refuse to take off our coats and go forward with our assistance, simply because they failed to send around automobiles in which to bring us to the trouble?

Pray, do not misunderstand me. I know as well as you do that we have strong aggressive men in our industrial life. They have pushed their heads through the crust of the business world. They in their earlier activities developed confidence in themselves, gradually great force came to them, but as team play had no part in their making, they, as captains of industry see no necessity for it amongst themselves in furthering the national good. They are quite ready to go forward individually and give the government their views on any state issue. We are all willing to do that. If we could only pay our taxes in generous advice, this Canadian democracy would indeed be rolling in wealth. That in itself is an excellent sign—in fact, what is to be expected from vigorous people, developed in northern latitudes. And in passing may I say that Canada is several shades too cold in winter to give the best results in the production of human vigour unless we cease hermetically sealing up houses, especially the smaller ones, during our long winters, in order to keep out frost, and incidentally that which is vital to sound health—fresh air.

It is not the individual views of aggressive men our governments need so much as their collective and intelligent support, (though I believe governments occasionally make the mistake of encouraging them). We know that no two successful men ever cross the same street in the same way. It is only "drifters"

While confessing to failure, I do not admit that it was the fault of the plan adopted by myself and a few associates. If there is any criticism a few years hence due to inactivity today, it will, I hold, not be charged against the outline of procedure that was carefully worked out and made available for our captains of industry.

who do that. Individual opinions differ. Let me present the idea in this way. Suppose some great issue is under consideration by a government, and individual views of say six aggressive men are canvassed independently of each other, the results most certainly would be widely divergent, and at least five men more or less dissatisfied because their opinions had not prevailed. And an aggressive man dissatisfied can make some stir in a community. The idea is entirely undemocratic. It is only in autocracies that the one man opinion goes. Frequently, it is based upon the views of a group of specialists, and in consequence is sound. *Success demands team play.* The star player in an athletic game who fails to recognize the necessity of co-operation may give brilliant exhibitions of his capacity, but for the team to win out he must play the game and not be above working with his weaker associates. Well, Sir George Foster's proposed convention evidently has been dropped. It is true that certain interests are at work, but there has been no real swing thrown into the movement by our captains of industry, and we may find ourselves in the future very much like the unorganized community when a fire breaks out—all running hither and thither, not knowing exactly what to do, and expending energy without corresponding results. A friend of mine, whose opinion I value, in writing me about the proposed convention, said:—

“The general optimism of Canadian business which has always existed in the past has been the outcome of the hit or miss way in which they conduct their affairs. Naturally, this is almost inevitable in a young country, and the United States passed through such a stage both before and immediately after the Civil War. They are not entirely free from it yet. It will doubtless be many years before Canadian business is completely established, but if the information about all sorts and kinds of projects is collected, standardized and made available, a great many of the mistakes which have been made in the past can be avoided in the future.”

Gentlemen, if we lack the courage to initiate new movements for the good of the State, let us at least embrace that virtue—the genius to imitate others who have.

Had the convention taken place, two subjects I had hoped would receive serious consideration, namely, national statistics, and, second, some plan for obtaining greater efficiency from capital and labour through a more complete understanding between the two, and this latter, I appreciate, is just as important as it is difficult to work out, and that is saying a very great deal indeed. Let us, however, make no mistake about this matter. The issue between the two forces must be faced. Better understanding between capital and labour as well as an efficient statistical service are the *sine qua non* of the country's sound progress. One of the really outstanding men in the British Empire—Earl Cromer—a few years ago said that Canada should build up a great statistical service. He added, they say figures will prove anything, but you cannot do very much business without them.

I am aware that this is another matter in which Sir George Foster is much interested. Four years ago he appointed a commission of six members to investigate the trade situation as to statistics and to report a comprehensive and co-ordinate scheme adequate to the needs of the country. The commission subsequently made a good report advising certain enlargements, but especially advising unification and the prevention of duplication, overlapping and the

present system of work, in large part at cross purposes. The Minister of Trade and Commerce followed this up by reviving the office of Dominion Statistician and more recently has tackled the concrete problems involved in reform as between the several departments. This work and its enlargement along proper lines ought to be pushed and pushed hard, as it is the real starting point in the sound and economical development of the country's industries. It is true, in the course of time, by evolution, we would gradually draw away from the hit or miss method of doing things, but it should be our ambition to speed up and quickly reach scientific methods. That is impossible without complete statistical information, and I go further than that. I hold we should have a group of men in our statistical service whom, for a better name, I will call condensers. Like our neighbours to the south of us, we appoint commissions to investigate and report upon technical subjects. Much labour is expended in bringing together a great deal of valuable material, occasionally dealt with by technical writers in more or less technical language, with the result that the shelves of libraries are loaded with volumes and volumes of such reports, rarely looked into. Canada, the younger country, before embarking on any investigation, should have the book-shelves in Washington and elsewhere thoroughly searched so that if we have to carry on some special work, at least let us start where others have left off. I venture the opinion that the book of 100 pages or more on any technical subject is very seldom looked at. What then happens to these reports containing several volumes? They are dusted occasionally, and that is about all. We don't place Macaulay's History of England before the child that is just starting the subject. If I wished to popularize the Scriptures, I would employ the publicity man—the very highest type—and illuminate them in sections. In that way I believe there would in a short time be a much greater number working over the common text. Departmental technical libraries, too, where these can be usefully developed, should be stimulated and encouraged, instead of being, as there is reason to believe is the case at the present time, neglected if not positively discouraged, as trifling and unprofitable work.

These commission reports to which I refer, both in the United States and here, still kept in cold storage, remind me of that which was a common sight on some of our macadamized roads about thirty years ago. Those of you who can go back to that period will remember seeing cords of large stones, neatly piled at various places along the side of the highway. In due course, labourers came along, and after several days of hard work each pile would be transformed into a mass of small broken stone, later on, to be spread over the surface of the road wherever any repairs were necessary. We need technical condensers associated with very able publicity men, engaged in breaking up these reports, illuminating them, turning them out in readable sections, and distributing them where they will be of some service to the people. It seems to me in that respect we just stop short of completing the valuable work of some of our technical commissions. To give you some idea of the chaos that exists in the matter of gathering and tabulating statistics, I will allude to a few instances of work carried on by our respective governments:

(1) MANUFACTURES. This country goes for five years at a stretch without a single figure relating to its manufacturing output. At the present moment, the latest statistics we have with regard to manufacturing, bear date 1910. What use are the figures of 1910 for the problems of 1917? There have been three years of the most rapid development in the history of the industry

since 1910, followed by two years of depression, followed by another two years in an absolutely new direction created by the war.

(2) There are 27 Departments, Dominion and Provincial, publishing statistics with regard to industrial production. Each is doing it according to the dictates of its own sweet will. No two have the same method. It is impossible, therefore, to combine their figures, because capitalization, etc., means one thing here and another there, one year is the fiscal period here, another period there. The fiscal years of our governments do not all end on the same date. In one case it is the 31st March, in others, 30th June, and still in others, the 30th September.

(3) As a sample of overlapping involved in the above, take the following: The Dominion Mines Department publishes the value of the output of Ontario brickyards in 1915 as \$1,987,478. The Ontario Department of Mines publishes the figures as \$1,468,182; the Census Office, which happens to have taken a postal census of this industry in 1915, makes the figure \$1,524,879.

In each instance, the figures are doubtless correct, but they are based upon different interpretations of output adopted by the several services.

(4) Still another case. Agriculture this time. The Census Department has been estimating the acreage under wheat in Saskatchewan this year at about 6,000,000 acres. The Provincial Department of Agriculture has put it at about 6,800,000. Now, we have the actual returns of the Census taken during the past summer by the visit of an enumerator to every farm, and it appears that the acreage is 8,500,000. Wide divergence of this character exists in nearly every province.

(5) The 1911 census put the total value of the mining industry at \$122,004,932, in 1910. The annual return of the Dominion Mines Department, however, put it at \$106,823,623 for that year.

(6) But the most extraordinary spectacle is afforded by our trade statistics. Once a month the Customs Department issues a 400 or 500 page volume on the trade and navigation of the country. A couple of weeks later, the Trade and Commerce Department takes the same figures and republishes them from a trade point of view, with a number of analyses, etc. Similarly, at the end of each year, we have two enormous volumes, each telling the same story, though in a slightly different way, and as if this were not enough, the Year Book of the Census Office tells it over again to the tune of a couple of hundred pages.

Not all of this would disappear by amalgamation because there is some difference in viewpoint, but undoubtedly 30 or 40 per cent. would disappear and the country saved so much, as well as having a greatly strengthened organization for purveying this very necessary information. At present we have three distinct departmental organizations engaged in the analysis and presentation of foreign trade statistics. A person wishing to be informed as to the trade in say, fish or hay, may apply to three departments and get an independent reply from each.

I have only touched the fringe of national statistics but trust you will conclude that I have made out a good case. And if you feel that I have, pray endeavour to give the movement some real swing by getting the press interested. We must realize that in these strenuous times the Government cannot be expected to keep issues other than war well up in the forefront unless the people

through the press make it quite clear that certain problems must be promptly attacked and attacked with vigour.

Now, may I say a few words about capital and labour. Because it is a most difficult subject, that is no reason we should be afraid to discuss it. Every serious discussion of a problem may throw some light on it and shorten the distance to its final solution. In a few words, what has been the situation between capital and labour? Has it not developed largely into one of distrust on both sides. Who has been preaching any sane doctrine as to the fair and reasonable return for man's energy? At one end of the scale there have been flagrant cases of getting away with everything in sight, within the limit of the law, against which it seems no law existed, and the holding of the operator at the other end down to a minimum of return. Trade unionism was the outcome. There was a time when I was opposed to unionism but my views in that respect have since changed. Occasionally, however, unionism out-Herods Herod, with the plain people sandwiched in between. Labour and capital are the counterparts of each other. The one cannot exist without the other. The best interests of both demand that they should work in harmony together. There is still much for unions to do. While they largely fix the rates of wages for different trades, no account is taken of the efficient and inefficient, as both are practically treated alike—that is, there are no certificated grades—no encouragement to push to some higher standard in a craft with a correspondingly higher wage. All our problems reduce themselves to questions of human energy, the efficiency of the operative.

Wherein, generally speaking, have our manufacturing classes in Canada requiring skilled labour taken any serious interest in the technical training of their younger and inexperienced employees. These, doubtless, receive a good shop training, but they need much more than that. We have at the present time in cold storage, Dr. J. W. Robertson's exhaustive report on Industrial and Technical Training. This is the time for our captains of industry to get it out and in conjunction with the responsible leaders of our labour unions, employ their able brains in developing a workable plan for breeding up a well-educated class of mechanics in Canada; in which, in the course of a few years, we would have a system of promotion through examination before Boards constituted by the two forces, capital and labour.

In leaving this question of preparedness, and the failure of Sir George Foster's convention to materialize, what has been the burden of my remarks—to speed-up national efficiency. That demands national service from the citizen—more time taken by the best brains in the country from their individual activities and given to the State—more team play amongst such men—more evidence that we who are remaining at home are working over-time in order to make Canada a country of greater opportunity in the period following the war. In that way, we will show our men in Flanders that we are doing our bit—in that way we will encourage them—in that way we will bring Canada to the attention of others who will come to us seeking greater opportunity than they possessed before taking part in this world struggle.

We are a democratic people. We are strong for the liberty of the individual. Democracies in this age do not want war. But if democracies run counter to autocracy, don't you think we had better push aside some of our democratic notions which I hold are undemocratic. To wait and see what the people think before governments act, in peace time may be sound, but in times of war we

sacrifice many of the lives of our noblest men by such a policy. It has taken Britain fully two years to bring the man power of England and Scotland into action. True democracy, it seems to me, should always be ready to promptly adjust itself to changed conditions, be they climatic or otherwise, unless we wish to freeze to death or be strangled through aggressive militarism. My view is that the man who has equal rights with me to go to the polls and have a voice in the government of the country, has equal responsibilities with me, and under ultra abnormal conditions should instantly be prepared to take to the trenches or any place else where his country's needs demand, as indicated by the Government for which he is in part responsible. On humanitarian grounds alone, that is essential in order to quickly bring into play the full strength of the country's man power, thereby supporting those who have nobly jumped into the breach at the call of national trouble. However, I am not suggesting conscription in Canada simply because we, like our sister democracies, failed to do the necessary spade work in advance. The time, I fear, is too short now to make a success of it, though frankly I believe under existing conditions in the absolute control of all the forces within the state, by the state, for the good of the state.

We complain about lack of interest in some particular locality and the indifference elsewhere, but do we realize that we reap what we sow? To what extent have we ever attempted to develop a strong sense of citizenship in our people? A crisis arises and we fail in some quarters to get results that suit our views, and we become extremely critical and say very disagreeable things, when all the time it is probably the outcome of our own indifference in the past. If we really believe in British ideals, and if we believe they are worth fighting for, don't you think we should in the past couple of decades have given more of our time to their discussion, especially amongst those who are neither British-born nor the descendants of such. However, that would have been regarded as quite too idealistic, and, furthermore, we had not the time to spare. We some way appeared to think, stupidly enough, that the mantle of British citizenship by some miracle would cause the individual to become charged to the marrow of his bones with our ideals. From this time henceforth let us always remember that that which we may some day wish to reap, we must meanwhile sow, and sow well in advance.

Today the cry should be for thrift and still greater thrift. The General Manager of the Bank of Montreal, at the annual meeting of his bank a few weeks ago, said: "Thrift is overdue but can be started forthwith," and he referred to "those who are living in the paradise of the unwise." Do we appreciate that that solemn warning has come to us out from one of the great institutions of the country. Have our ears and minds dissolved partnership? Are we to be disciples of the doubting Thomas, only to be able to scent trouble when it grips us? What we need as never before is some unity amongst the members of our Press, to have them turn their batteries upon the public and hammer home a few fundamental truths. To that end, gentlemen, I would like to see our Canadian Clubs—non-political organizations—make an effort to get our press united in a campaign of Thrift. And why should your Club not inaugurate the movement? Take the idea home with you, gentlemen. Think it over.

I am aware from statements appearing in the Press within the past few days that the Minister of Finance anticipates some movement of the kind at an

early date. That, however, need not interfere with any spade work that you meanwhile may do. Again, I say, Gentlemen, we want some leadership from our captains of industry—greater evidence of national service. Canada is doing magnificently in this war, and our women are in the forefront of the movement. Our people of means are giving freely, but there is a western slogan now in use, that is the only real measure of that kind of sacrifice. It is—"Give until it hurts." And that slogan might well be adopted and applied at this time in a campaign of thrift. "Save until it hurts." This is no time to squander even a farthing. But few men indeed can look inwardly and honestly say that they are free from reproach in that respect. May I make a suggestion? Let club men adopt very simple and inexpensive meals in their clubs. This may strike some of you as trivial. What is the use of asking individuals here and there to deny themselves small luxuries? Why not make a bold appeal to the whole nation to economize? Well, that is being done, but what effect will it have if we rest there? Do you imagine for a moment that a nation unaccustomed to thrift—as we undoubtedly are—will be converted in a moment by a general appeal? That sort of things is spectacular but ineffective. No. National thrift must begin with the individual, and the appeal to be effective must be to the individual. Each one of us must have it hammered into him as a concrete fact. Every man who grasps, and accepts, the idea that by personal self-denial he is helping his country to win the war, becomes at once the centre of an ever-widening influence. The leaven of thrift must work outwards from the individual to the crowd, not from the crowd to the individual. A shrewd manufacturer with a new appliance to put on the market does not content himself with a general announcement of the fact. If he did, his business would not last twenty-four hours. He keeps hammering at the public until the merits of his ideas take root. He advertises, and advertises, and advertises. Above all, he goes after the individual, knowing full well that every man convinced is a conscious or unconscious missionary; that in the last analysis success with the crowd can only be gained through success with the individual.

It seems quite unnecessary to say anything as to the need of thrift. It is thrift, saturated through the very system of the Scotchman, that has placed him in the front rank of the human forces of the world. There is no national tonic to equal thrift. It is the very sure rudder to carry us individually and collectively through periods of great uncertainty. Thrift combines duty with profit. We know that commonplace saying—"A dollar saved is a dollar made." The State needs vast sums of money for carrying on this war. Let the people save and lend to the State. Let the State pay interest to the Canadian people instead of people in other countries.

Finally, Gentlemen, may I draw your attention to this fact—that this year is the semi-centennial of our Canadian confederacy. Fifty years ago we had a group of Canadians with great vision and vast courage, a group of men that any country would be proud to call her sons, and my vision is that if we hold to our stern duty in this struggle, Canada will forge well into the forefront of our Empire of Nations. Today, there is talking of holding an Imperial Conference at an early date to discuss war matters. To that, there can be no objection. Why should there not be held in our Dominion of Canada, towards the end of this—our fiftieth year of organic union—a gathering of the clans in which representatives of all political parties from each unit in the Empire would be represented. Then there could be taken up in a statesmanlike way the question

of confederacy of our Empire and the obligations it imposes. Standing alone or in common with others, Canada hereafter must continue to assume world obligations. There is no need for alarm amongst us if statesmen come together and especially if it is insisted that all political clothes be left at home. The stage and occasion would be most fitting. We have passed out into the world as a people who are prepared to fight and to suffer for humanity and right. The spirit of our people is for fair play. That is our safeguard, and in the conference of the units of our Empire that will always prevail. We may hold minor differences as to ways and means. We are all fighting side by side in this great world struggle, and we will be found standing side by side in peace times for the maintenance and preservation of our best traditions. I therefore believe that Canada stands on the threshold of a great career, not only amongst the nations of the world, but as the agency in bringing the British Empire and the great Republic to the south of us into such close and intimate relations in the future, as will mean much to the advancement of civilization.