

REPORT.

INTRODUCTION.

The Committee's Investigations.

DURING last session of Parliament it was decided by the Government that the Industries Committee should travel during the recess throughout the Dominion; take evidence and investigate not only existing industries, but discover, if possible, how new or budding industries might be encouraged and assisted. This work was entirely new so far as Select Committees were concerned, and it will now be for the House to determine whether or not the Committee's work has justified such a departure from established custom.

The Committee has to express its regret that many invitations to visit other districts than those where evidence was taken had to be declined. But the Committee has endeavoured to remedy, in part, this defect by obtaining from such districts written evidence and other information of a valuable kind.

Dearth of Labour.

The Committee desires to draw special attention to the fact that in whatever direction its investigations led, proof was given of the general and genuine scarcity of labour. Many industries as a consequence are in a languishing state, and new enterprises are being delayed. In offering possible solutions of this problem the Committee would solicit the careful consideration of its proposals.

The Committee's Recommendations.

In submitting its report the Committee would point to the mass of information obtained; but in order that practical results may follow speedily upon its work it has not dealt in detail with other than the more prominent of existing enterprises and those awaiting development. It is no exaggeration to say that there are hundreds of small industries which ought in the near future to profitably engage the attention, consideration, or assistance of the State. Our Dominion may well be described as a richly endowed but undeveloped country. Our possessions, capable of producing great wealth, are many; knowledge of them is possessed by few.

The Financial Aspect.

In making its recommendations the Committee has taken into its careful consideration the question of the necessary and necessarily large additional expenditure that will be entailed. The Committee realizes that the ultimate sum total of new expenditure will be great; but it would at once point out and seek to emphasize the fact that the sum involved will be spread over a period of years. Further, let it be said that payment in many cases can be made in interest-bearing bonds, redeemable at stated periods; and that the great bulk of the activities proposed will, from the profits derived, provide the necessary funds for such redemption.

A Plea for Self-reliance.

It should be the aim of the Government to impress upon the people that in all future efforts at development of the country's resources the policy of self-reliance cannot be too strongly fostered. The demands made upon us by the Great War have surely taught us many useful lessons. Our people were self-reliant during the greatest crisis the world has ever passed through, and they have proved their ability to provide funds the magnitude of which would have staggered us in the years that are past. In asking that its proposals should be adopted, the Committee urges the people of the country to assume in peace the attitude they assumed in war.