

shall be able to know what our full liability for the war expenditure of the country will be. We should within that period also be able to ascertain the full amount that will be required annually for interest and sinking fund, for pensions, and other payments in connection with the obligations to our citizen soldiers. The current annual expenditure in connection with war and the ordinary expenditure of the country itself are kept entirely separate, but it will only be possible to make adjustments when the final position is known.

LOCAL INDUSTRIES.

Honourable members will recognize that in the interests of the country every means should be taken for obtaining information which will assist the Government in framing legislation for the purpose of promoting the local industries of the Dominion.

With this object in view it is intended that the Industries and Commerce Committee should hold sittings during the recess in various parts of the country with the object of making inquiries and taking evidence from persons who are well qualified to express an opinion as to the direction in which legislative action should be taken.

The Government by this means hopes to obtain the very best advice possible before bringing in legislation in connection with this very important matter.

REPATRIATION OF SOLDIERS OF EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

With the cessation of hostilities it becomes our duty to see that full provision is made for the repatriation of our soldiers and their return to civil life. This important question has received a large measure of attention, and a comprehensive repatriation scheme has been devised. The problem presents many difficulties, the principal one being to secure unity of control in view of the number of State Departments which are concerned with the soldier during his transition to civilian status.

The proposals to be submitted will provide for the establishment of a new Department under a Ministerial Board of Control. The new Department, when dealing with the question of providing re-employment, will endeavour to secure for the returned soldier a return to his former position or to one closely allied thereto, and one of its main objects will be to provide permanent rather than temporary employment. It will also be charged with the duty of providing work for the soldier as soon after his discharge as possible, for the purpose of avoiding the evils of idleness, and also with the object of increasing the productivity of the country without delay.

It will no doubt be found that many soldiers gave up businesses or professions in order to serve, and it will be readily conceded that it is the duty of the State to assist these men to re-establish themselves as quickly as possible. It is proposed to make grants up to £250 for this purpose in approved cases where soldiers have been on active service. £500,000 will be set aside out of War Expenses Account for this purpose.

A very important part of the repatriation scheme will be the provision for the educational, curative, and vocational training of soldiers up to and after discharge from the Force. It is anticipated that the discharged soldiers who cannot find employment will include those who honestly desire re-employment, as well as some whose energies have been affected by war experiences. It is not considered that the mere payment of money to a fit man after discharge, and pending his re-employment, is a satisfactory method of meeting the problem, and it is therefore proposed that any financial assistance that may be granted to such a man will be conditional on his regularly attending some school of training, workshop, factory, or farm, &c., until he is replaced in civil employment. Every effort will be made to induce the men to become useful citizens. An opportunity will be afforded them of voluntarily submitting themselves for a carefully selected system of training, preferably in country districts; and, if necessary, power will be taken in difficult cases to submit them for special training until they are able to take their part as useful citizens in the working-life of the community.

The Government feels confident that it can rely on the hearty co-operation of all sections of the community to freely assist the men who have fought so well and successfully to preserve our liberties and possessions. All moneys that may be required for the general purposes of repatriation will be provided.