

Which shall it be?

The question to be decided is not one for to-day only, but for the future, and it resolves itself into this: Whether or not the Dominion should enter upon the course of action outlined in the recommendations which follow in this Committee's report; or whether we should refuse as a people to take advantage of our great opportunities, and merely continue to aimlessly muddle along in the old, old way, trusting to Providence to pull us through.

Increased Production and Cost of Living.

The Committee wishes to impress upon the public the necessity of increased production, and strongly dissents from the doctrine of those who insist that one way to cure the ills they find in life is by curtailing output. There is no greater fallacy, no more harmful practice. It is the very negation of all economic teaching; and, what is more, reduction in production ultimately casts its whole weight upon the shoulders of those least able to bear it—namely, the working class.

The question of the people's food and its cost has engaged the Committee's attention, and proposals are herein made which, if adopted, will tend in the direction of that goal so earnestly sought and yet so difficult to attain. It is quite vain to hope that the conditions of life and cost of living will ever again closely approximate to those of pre-war times. The world-wide tendency to-day is towards increased cost of production, even in countries where labour conditions have always been deplorable. Increased cost of production spells increased cost of living.

Hydro-electric Power.

The Committee has decided to place the Dominion scheme for the development of hydro-electric power in the forefront of its proposals, as it is more than convinced that the carrying-out of the scheme means increased production in both primary and secondary industries.

The Staff.

In closing this portion of its report the Committee desires to place on record its commendation of and thanks to the members of the staff, composed of Messrs. A. E. Briggs (secretary), D. H. Cameron and W. Berry (reporters). Absolute efficiency and devotion to duty characterized the members of the staff throughout.

HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER.

Of the many subjects that have come before your Committee that of the development of hydro-electric power must certainly be given the foremost place. The provision of adequate supplies of energy is the basis of all industrial progress; and if this country is in the near future to experience a period of great industrial expansion, then no more pressing duty devolves upon the State than the development of our magnificent resources of water-power.

An Emphatic Demand.

Wherever the Committee has been, whether in town or country, nothing has been more striking than the emphatic unanimity of the demand for electrical energy, and your Committee was much impressed with the results that have followed the introduction into Christchurch of this power from Lake Coleridge. Evidence was given in that city that even modern suction-gas plants had been discarded in favour of the electrical supply. Not only had existing industries been fostered and stimulated, but a number of new industries had already been started, while the establishment of further new undertakings was promised as soon as additional power could be obtained. It will be admitted that conditions of life and labour in the rural districts should be made easier and more attractive, and one of the surest ways to accomplish this end is to make electricity the ever-willing and reliable servant of the settler and farmer.