CATHOLIC CALL TO RECONSTRUCT

Church Council Lays Down Lines to Guide in Solving Post-War Problems.

TO INSURE SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Re-employment, Labor Reforms, Social Betterment, Economic Conditions and Relations Between Employer and Worker Subjects of Official Pronouncement.

Drawn up by the four bishops who represent the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in America in the administration of the National Catholic War Council, an official pronouncement on the social and economic reconstruction problems facing this nation has been issued from the headquarters of this church council in Washington, D. C. The document bears the signatures of Bishop Peter J. Muldoon of Rockford, Ill.; Bishop Joseph Schrembs of Toledo, O.; Bishop Patrick J. Hayes of New York City and Bishop William T. Russell of Charleston, S. C., and reads in part as follows:

Foreword.

"The ending of the Great War has brought peace. But the only safe guard of peace is social justice and a contented democracy. 'The deep unrest is emphatically felt and so widely voiced throughout the world is the most serious menace to the future peace of every nation and of the entire world. Great problems face us. They cannot be put aside; they must be met and solved with justice to all.

"In the hope of stating the lines that will best guide us in their right solution the following pronouncement is issued by the Administrative Committee of the National Catholic War Council.

Replacement of Men in Service.

"The first problem in the process of reconstruction is the industrial replacement of the discharged soldiers and sailors. The majority of these will undoubtedly return to their previous occupations. However, a very large number of them will either find their previous places closed to them or will hesitate to resume employments. The most important single measure for meeting this situation that has yet been suggested is the placement of such men on farms. Several months ago Secretary Lane recommended to Congress that returning soldiers and sailors should be given the opportunity to work at good wages upon some part of the million upon millions of acres of arid, swamp and cut-over timber lands in order to prepare them for cultivation. President Wilson, in his annual address to Congress, endorsed the proposal. As fast as this preliminary task has been performed the men should be assisted by government loans to establish themselves as farmers, either as owners or as tenants having long-time leases.

Farm Colonies.

"It is essential that both the work of preparation and the subsequent settlement of the land should be effected by groups or colonies, not by men living independently of one another and in depressing isolation.

"A plan of this sort is already in operation in England. The importance of the project as an item of any social reform program is obvious. It would afford employment to thousands upon thousands, would greatly increase the number of farm owners and independent farmers and would tend to lower the cost of living by increasing the amount of agricultural products. If it is to assume any considerable proportions it must be carried out by the governments of the United States and of the several States. Should it be undertaken by these authorities and operated on a systematic and generous scale it would easily become one of the most beneficial reform measures that has ever been attempted.

Employment Service.

"The reinstatement of the soldiers and sailors in urban industries will no doubt be facilitated by the United States Employment Service. This agency has attained a fair degree of development and efficiency during the war. Unfortunately there is some danger that it will go out of existence or be greatly weakened at the end of the period of demobilization. It is the obvious duty of Congress to continue and strengthen this important institution. The problem of unemployment is with us always. Its solution requires the co-operation of many agencies and the use of many methods, but the primary and indispensable instrument is a national system of labor exchanges working in harmony with State, municipal and private employment bureaus.

Women War Workers.

"One of the most important problems of readjustment is that created by the presence in industry of immense numbers of women who have taken the places of men during the war. Mere justice, to say nothing of chivalry, dictates that these women should not be compelled to suffer an greater loss or inconvenience than is absolutely necessary, for their services to the nation have been second only to the services of the men whose places they were called upon to fill. The ideal solution might be to find employment for women in industries in which they are not exposed to injury to health or morals. Women should be given a quick, inexpensive train and trolley car service, clean locomotives and a great number of other facilities for which conditions are ripe and which would go a long way toward solving the problem of the home traffic. Another general principle is that the proportion of women in industry ought to be kept within the smallest practical limits. If we have an efficient public employment service, if a goodly number of the returned soldiers and sailors are placed on the land and if wages and the demand for goods are kept up to the level which is vastly attainable all female workers who are displaced from tasks that they have been performing only since the beginning of the war will be able to find suitable employments in other parts of the industrial field or in the domestic occupations which sorely need their presence. These women were engaged in the same tasks as men should receive equal pay for equal amounts and qualities of work.

National War Labor Board.

"One of the most beneficial governmental organizations of the war is the National War Labor Board. Upon the basis of a few fundamental principles it has succeeded in settling all the serious industrial disputes which have arisen and in securing wages to decent levels in many industries endangered through the operation of the law of supply and demand. It has been a great piece of work for which the country owes much to the men who have been its members. The Board has been criticised in certain quarters for its decisions and it has been charged that it has not given due weight to the cost of living in its wage awards. The War Labor Board has been criticised in certain quarters in Congress and elsewhere because it has not been given the power to enforce its decisions. We believe that the Board's decisions have been in the main just and that the power of its decisions should be increased. It is obvious that if the decisions of the Board are not enforcible they will not be forthcoming in disputed and doubtful cases. The Board's decisions have been disagreeable to the employers in some cases and to the employees in other cases. The Board has been criticised because it has not been given the power to enforce its decisions