

CITIZENS' BUSINESS

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POLITICS vs. PATRIOTISM



Nero fiddled while Rome was burning. While local authorities and politicians quarrel over petty spoils, our boys are dying on the plains of France in the name of democracy. Urgent problems both for today and for the future, are upon us. The daily press deals more or less adequately with the needs of the moment, but there has been almost nothing said about the local problems of the reconstruction period.

When our boys come marching home they will be in need of jobs, and lots of them, thousands and thousands of them. Who will give them work? What will happen when the munitions factories and other war industries close down? Some people think we'll muddle through somehow. Some of them even deny the existence of any problem. But as a matter of fact, after every war the problem of reconstruction has been a difficult one. A few generations ago, thousands of veterans of European wars were *hung as vagrants*. More recently other veterans have sold shoe-strings or begged on the street corners. After the Civil War we had free land in the West to give to the soldiers but that has now gone. If we are not to face a disastrous crisis we must make thorough preparations in advance.

The duty of the cities of America is to plan now comprehensive municipal programs of public works to bridge over the critical period of readjustment. The city planners should prepare definite projects, and determine exactly the amounts of labor, material and money that would be needed in each case. Bonds should be issued for this post-war work. Orders and contracts should be prepared to a point where orders can be wired to the manufacturers for pipe, cement, brick, structural steel, etc., on a few days notice. Philadelphia is in a very fortunate position in regard to public works as so many have been suspended for the period of the war. But this is not enough. We should plan to care for double the number of men that have left.

A complete survey should be made of all the local war industries, the suspended or curtailed industries that will renew operation at the end of the war, giving the number of workers that will be affected. New work must be planned, industrial housing, parkways, streets, extensions to the water works, sewers, transportation system, wharves, grade separations.

Other cities realize the need. The Chicago Tribune urges the provision of a committee of reconstruction for that city. The State of Illinois has already prepared a \$60,000,000 bond program for roads to be built after the war. Toledo has a reconstruction program well under way. Rochester, N. Y., has made steps in this direction. The National Municipal League has appointed a committee on reconstruction.

In the larger national field, Secretary of the Interior Lane is working out a huge scheme of land reclamation for the use of returned soldiers. The Council of National Defense and an Advisory Commission appointed by President Wilson have begun an intensive and extensive study of the problems of post-war reconstruction. All of the European countries and Canada have reconstruction commissions at work on elaborate programs.

The problem is real, vital and urgent. It must and shall be solved. This is no time for politics, nor for neglect. In times of crisis, politics is adjourned, as President Wilson says. *Politics is the exact opposite of patriotism.* Will City Hall meet the emergency, or will it go by default?