

UNEMPLOYMENT

AND DISTRESS

The war must affect many industries and impose hardship upon many people. Agriculture, however, may benefit, and at least there should be no decrease in the demand for farm labor. In filling the regiments for service abroad and for home defence, some vacancies in factories and business houses will be created. So many will leave the country to take service with the British and foreign armies. But at best there will be unemployment and distress, and active and vigorous measures must be taken to deal with the situation.

We believe the Department of Labor at Ottawa has made a close study of conditions, and is eager to co-operate with any agencies through which relief can be afforded. There will be necessity alike for Federal, Provincial and municipal action. No doubt many voluntary organizations will also appear as the need for action presses. So far as we can learn, the Boards of Trade, the branches of the Manufacturers' Association, and the Labor organizations are actuated by a common spirit. Employers generally will answer the appeal of Mr. Crothers to continue operations as far as their resources will permit. The leaders of labor are just as ready to make sacrifices in order that as many workmen as possible may have at least partial employment.

No doubt there are employers who will consider only their own interests. But we believe they are not numerous. So there are those who will raise prices without mercy and plunder as opportunity offers. But these, again, are not numerous. The banks are acting with discretion and consideration. Among all classes we have evidence that patriotism is not confined to those who will go to the front. The flag is honored when men give their lives to keep it flying. It is as greatly honored by those who set themselves to alleviate distress and feed the hungry. As there must be leaders in the field, so there must be leaders in organizing to assist the needy and increase employment.

It is folly to think that the existing agencies will be adequate for this service. It will be criminal to temporize and delay. We must not hesitate at heroic measures of relief any more than we hesitate at heroic measures of defence. Road building or other undertakings to give employment may be necessary. Organized measures to get more people at work on the land may be desirable. Co-operative social machinery should be established to distribute the unemployed so that there may be fewer congested centres and no scarcity of labor in any field or industry. If those are discovered who will not work on the land, or wherever work is available, they should be made to understand that they cannot become charges on the community. Either work or go hungry, should be the order in so far as work can be provided. So we should have no consideration for those who would deliberately make food scarce and dear, or who would throw workmen upon the streets unnecessarily.