

UNEMPLOYMENT

The answer of the Government to the deputation asking for Federal assistance to relieve unemployment was not unsatisfactory. The delegates chiefly represented Western municipalities, where the problem is more acute than in Eastern Canada. In Ontario there are only a few centres where unemployment is serious, although there is a percentage of people out of work in all the industrial communities. But Ontario has no problem to which the Province and the municipalities are unequal. It is out of the question to suggest that the Dominion Government should give direct money grants to municipalities. From such action only misunderstanding and confusion would result. Moreover, the problem of employment does not rest directly upon the Dominion Government. It lies at least as fairly upon the Provinces and the municipalities.

In hope that the war would be of short duration, there has been no adequate dealing with unemployment in the centres of population. It has been difficult to place the responsibility where it belongs. The cities have looked to the Provinces, and the Provinces to the Dominion. It was for this reason that the deputation at Ottawa suggested a Commission of four or five active and responsible persons who would arrange a basis of co-operation between the municipalities, the Provinces and the Dominion, and enforce the measures recommended.

Through such a Commission a centre of responsibility would be established and effective co-operation assured. But whether or not a Commission is appointed, there is reason to believe that the Dominion Government, according to the measure of its responsibility, will assist in finding work for the unemployed. These are chiefly the foreign elements in a few Eastern centres and in many of the Western communities. What form this assistance will take has to be determined and probably will be determined immediately. In what is done there will be no savor of charity and for all money expended there will be some direct return to the country.

In the Western Provinces, which do not control their own natural resources, the problem is more serious than it is in older Canada. Thus the Dominion Government probably lies under a greater obligation to the Western communities. It has to be remembered, however, that for seed grain alone the Dominion Government has expended nearly \$12,000,000 in these Provinces. The outlay for public works all over the country is as great as before the war began. The obligations of the Dominion have increased out of all proportion to those of the municipalities or the Provinces. Mr. White has to provide \$1,000,000 a day, while for reasons

which do not require discussion he does not borrow in the United States and is not free to borrow in Great Britain, save for war purposes. The American money markets, however, are open to Canadian municipalities and Provinces.

When all these facts are remembered, Sir Robert Borden's answer to the deputation was as sympathetic and encouraging as could be expected. The Government will meet its full responsibility in a difficult situation. If the municipal governments and Provincial Administrations will do likewise, we should face next winter with reasonable confidence. There is a problem of employment which has to be considered. To evade it is impossible. To deny its magnitude is foolish. It is just as unwise to attempt to impose the whole load on the Dominion Government. As has been said, the municipalities and the Provinces must do their share, and if they will show the same disposition that Ottawa manifests we should have early and effective action to reduce unemployment and relieve distress in all the communities in which action is imperative.