

DAY OF BIG PAY AT MUNITION WORK NEARING ITS CLOSE

Cessation of Munition Making Welcomed by Canadian Em- ployers, Says Toronto Writer

Toronto, Sept. 4.—The recent announcement from Ottawa that the long-rumored curtailment of the shell-making industry in Canada was about to materialize has already taken on more definite shape by the receipt of instructions by a number of the largest plants throughout the country, ordering the discontinuance of the making of shrapnel forgings. In most of the larger centres the shell-making industry the manufacture of munitions has been decreasing steadily for some time and the situation recently created has therefore been rendered slightly less acute. So gradual has been the falling off in manufacturing activity that in practically every case the workers has been absorbed into other industry, and it is believed that the shortage of labor will render any general unemployment unnecessary, though it is agreed that the high wages of the munition plants cannot longer prevail.

Accompanying recent rumors of the cutting off of munition manufacturing, either permanently or temporarily, was a more or less general idea that the situation would be accompanied with something approaching a panic, for the munitions industry has been one of the main supports of the country during the past years of war. Despite such predictions leaders of the industry were in an optimistic frame of mind over the turn of events.

A canvass of official opinion on the subject reveals the fact that there is a disposition to regard the cutting off of this source of employment before the end of the war an advantage rather than a disadvantage, in that it allows of a present readjustment of labor conditions and precludes the possibility of difficulties arising at the termination of the war, when in addition to munition employes being thrown out of work, there would be 200,000 or more soldiers returning from the war zone to be looked after in the matter of employment.

Going Into Other Lines.

In some cases munition plants have already made arrangements to carry on manufacturing in other branches, and will therefore be in a position to make use of a large number of their present employes engaged in making munitions. One large establishment down east is turning its plant into a

locomotive works to handle European orders which will not be completed for twelve months. This will give employment to about 2,000 men out of the present employed number of 3,000. Other similar cases can be found.

Another advantageous result which is expected from the cutting down of munitions manufacture is the resultant release of money for shipbuilding purposes. It has been stated on good authority that this to a great extent is the purpose for which the manufacture of munitions was curtailed. If this be the case it will mean an extensive enlargement of the activities of the Imperial Munitions Board. This work will create a big demand for many articles required in ship construction and auxiliary equipment such as engines. One large bridge works is planning to engage in the construction of marine engines on a large scale immediately.

The advantages to be secured by the employment of such a large number of skilled mechanics—more than have ever been required in Canada in the past—are evident, but another big factor in the situation is that it will be instrumental in easing up the labor situation. The release of munition workers will provide a source from which industries may fill their works with the skilled mechanics required and avoid the further necessity of employing female labor for such work. In some cases, too, production in other lines will be speeded up by the substitution of skilled labor,

Wages Bound to Fall.

Wages to be earned in the new employment will fall far below the scale which has been reached in munition plants. There is little doubt but that workers will be able to find plenty of work in other lines if they are prepared to suffer the cutting down of their remuneration. In most cases the average workman in the munition plant has been earning from \$3 to \$4 per day, whereas he will have to be satisfied with \$3 or under in other branches of industry. Then again it is stated that when the demand for skilled workmen increases, as it is likely to do, they will be able to demand from \$4 to \$5 a day and more.

The manager of one large munition plant said that, as far as his firm was concerned, the order practically

meant the throwing out of 3,000 men or more who used to make munitions. These men are not classed as skilled mechanics, but are what are called "single operation" men, who by practice have become skilled on a single machine or operation. The most of them could not be used in other branches of industry which require a skilled mechanic, such as the building of locomotives. Among the munition workers there were said to be many skilled mechanics and others showing ability to become skilled, and in the case mentioned these men would be retained. The subject of readjustment was admittedly causing this company much concern, but the change was being effected as rapidly and with as little friction as possible.

One large employer of labor stated that the men in his plant could be drafted in large numbers to the regular work that calls for skilled workmen. As for the others, he was confident that the demands of other industrial work were sufficient to create no condition of unemployment. The shipbuilding industry was declared to be due for a big boost, and it is to this that industrial leaders look for a solution of the unemployment question among skilled and other mechanics. Not only will there be a big call for mechanics for actual building, but also in subsidiary industries, such as the making of bolts and rivets, building engines, etc.