

AVERTING DANGER OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Problem Is Three-fold One— Task Ahead of Repatria- tion Committee.

"Not all the phases of the problem (reconstruction), however, fall within the field of the Repatriation Committee," says the Survey of Repatriation, which has been prepared by Mr. H. J. Daly, of Toronto, whose term as Director of Repatriation is finished. "Strictly speaking the word repatriation should be restricted to the bringing back of our men from overseas and getting them re-established in civil life and occupation. But by Order-in-Council the Committee has to deal not only with this question but with all labor conditions that may arise during the transition to a peace footing. Not only the soldier but the civilian worker comes within its purview. Its task may therefore be defined, as the absorption of our soldiers and war workers into normal productive industry. This absorption must take place under living and working conditions that justify the last four years of sacrifice. The provision of decent living and working conditions and the other more permanent problems of reconstruction come directly under other Governmental agencies, while the Repatriation Committee is acting in close co-operation.

Unemployment Chief Danger.

"The crux of the whole problem is the securing of acceptable employment. The chief danger the Committee must seek to avoid is that of unemployment. That this is a danger is obvious.

"The chief characteristics of war-time industry are its mobilization under Government direction, and its production for a market which could not be glutted. In peace time, on the other hand, industry is organized under the 'seemingly chaotic freedom of democracy' and turns out products which must be absorbed and taken off the market by spontaneous public demand. It must be evident to all that a sudden transition from the former regime to the latter runs the grave danger of causing widespread unemployment. . . . But Canadian industry is extremely adaptable, and with careful planning on the part of Governmental agencies and sympathetic co-operation from all classes of the public, it is hoped that the extent of unemployment and the length of the period of dislocation will be reduced to a minimum."

After showing how unemployment in Canada may be caused in three ways, (1) by the return of 250,000 soldiers from overseas, (2) by the cessation of war orders and munition work and the displacing of probably 250,000 war workers and (3) public uncertainty as to the future, especially as to prices, which may cause retrenchment in purchases, the report continues.

How Can They be Absorbed.

"How can this danger of unemployment be averted? How can these discharged soldiers and displaced workers be absorbed into normal productive industry without delay or friction? This statement of the problem suggests that the problem must be a three-fold one:—

"(1) Proper distribution of employment.

"(2) Provision of employment opportunities.

"(3) Decent living and working conditions."

For the purpose of co-ordinating the different organizations, official and unofficial, trying to solve the problem, the Repatriation Committee was organized. The chapter on "the machinery of Repatriation," after telling of the dangers of unorganized effort, thus describes the work of the Repatriation Committee, of which Mr. H. J. Daly of Toronto, is director "The most important work of the Committee is to secure the closest possible co-operation between the different departments of the Government, at Ottawa. For this purpose a departmental co-ordinating committee has been instituted. It consists of the representatives of the various departments interested and the director's staff. Matters affecting two or more departments are discussed and recommendations as to common policy are made. This has resulted in much good in the way of greater co-ordination of effort and the prevention of overlapping and friction."

Conferences Bring Co-ordination.

Another part of the Committee's work is co-ordinating the work of Provincial and Municipal Governments. This is under the supervision of Mr. Harry Bragg. The work of the various unofficial organizations, Red cross, Y. M. C. A., Y. W. C. A., Salvation Army, K. of C., Canadian Patriotic Fund, etc., is also co-ordinated by the Committee and various schemes of co-operation have been worked out as the result of many conferences.