

The Unemployed

One frequently hears the opinion expressed in Toronto that the reason so many unemployed men are to be found here is because of the municipal minimum wage regulation.

"Men come here," somebody will tell you, "because Toronto, as a civic duty, tries to employ the unemployed. Men will not work for fifteen cents per hour in the country while the fact is widely advertised that 25 cents per hour is the fixed minimum wage in Toronto."

No doubt there ought to be a Minister of Labor in the Ontario Government, presiding over a highly organized department. Work is the chief interest in life to most men. Those who manage the affairs of a city cannot reach far enough, do not operate over a large enough area, to be able to do very much in the way of equalizing employment. A city can only provide work to a certain amount, and after that it can but resort to the exercise of charity. It should be possible for a Province—including large cities, small ones, agricultural districts, forests, lakes, rivers that need damming, swamps that need draining, land that needs clearing, and roads that need making—to organize in course of time an elaborate system for the equalizing of employment throughout the seasons and over city and country areas. In doing this it would be possible to see not only that work is found for the idle man when work is scarce, but also that the same man keeps busy when work is plentiful. Just now there is no system about it, nor can there be until the Province takes over the whole question of unemployment as one of the most important of its cares and one of the most useful services it can render its inhabitants.

But that unemployment, as we have it here and now, is chargeable to the little by-law that guarantees fair wages to those who work for the city or for contractors on civic undertakings, we cannot agree. We cannot assent to that view because similar conditions as to unemployment exist in cities all over the continent—Montreal, New York, Boston, Kansas City, Vancouver. One finds in newspapers that come from all directions the same discussion of ways and means of making work that has been going on here.