

THE UNEMPLOYED PROBLEM.

To the Editor of the Free Press.

Sir,—The solution of the vast problem of unemployment is causing many to think furiously, and various are the remedies suggested. The cry "back to the land" is utter foolishness unless some system is devised of getting the people on the land, and, more important still, in keeping them there. How trivial are some of the suggestions for dealing with the unemployed, such as cultivating vacant lots, vegetable growing, municipal stone yards and road construction.

These suggestions indicate that people are at last becoming interested, but how futile, when one considers the vastness of the undertaking necessary to actually place, say, 50,000 men on the land. Unfortunately for us all, employed and unemployed, our Dominion legislators are frittering away precious months and years, apparently too much concerned over votes for soldiers to heed the conditions which prevail in the cities of the western provinces. If our statesmen have the wisdom and ability to grapple with the situation it can certainly be overcome, and instead of slackness and unemployment we shall have abundant prosperity.

Let us show the world that we as a country know how to handle the people who flock to these shores before we look for a greater immigration. The unemployment problem will not be overcome without the expenditure of huge sums. Why cannot the Government embark on a great scheme to place, say, 50,000 men on the land? According to the last annual report of the Department of the Interior the area of land available for entry in the three western provinces is 25,700,000 acres, that is, about 160,000 homesteads.

Now, we have the men, the land and all the necessary Government departmental machinery. I would advocate a scheme whereby the Dominion Government would make a loan of \$1,000 to each person willing to take up and farm a homestead; also compel the railway companies to give free transportation to settlers and their families to the rail terminus. When the prospective settler reaches the terminus the Government might advance \$100, the balance to be paid in instalments as work on the homestead progresses, say, \$400 the first year and \$200 for the second and third year, as the farmer complies with the duties decided upon.

The simplicity is apparent. The Government will have merely acted as the mortgage company, but instead of waiting until the farmer has proved up, he will have had the advance from the start. In the meantime the Government will have ample security in withholding the title from the farm, which, with improvements made thereon, will be worth, say, \$3,000. The settler could then be given five, eight or ten years for the termination of his homestead duties to repay the \$1,000 Government mortgage on the farm.

Oh, that the Government would realize the enormity of the problem and be prepared to deal with it in a large-hearted, generous manner. Surely the Government are not doing too much in standing surety for \$1,000 for a man and family who will comply with the homestead regulations. As the thousands of men make entry for these homesteads, the Government could easily raise the loan of 10, 25, or even 50 million dollars, if 50,000 men can be found who have the desire to homestead.

With the unemployed on the land, plowing, building, fencing, etc., and suitable alterations made in the immigration laws, the abnormal unemployment would be history.

B. C. JAMES

Winnipeg, May 4.