

Plan Series of Meetings on Problem of Unemployment

Labor Educational Association Will Carry on Campaign Throughout the Province—Suggestion As to Farms

The Labor Educational Association convention at St. Catharines on Monday was taken up almost altogether with the discussion of the problem of unemployment. It was decided to begin a campaign through the Province similar to that which was carried on for the Workmen's Compensation Act. Literature will be distributed and mass meetings will be held for a period of over a month, beginning in the latter part of September, to centre public interest upon this problem. The most interesting suggestion for the relief of unemployment that was adopted by the meeting was that for land colonization by the Government. It was suggested that small farms be set aside and that the Provincial and Dominion Governments assist the workers to settle on them.

The opposition that developed toward the Labor Educational Association at the Labor Council on Thursday night came from the representatives of the Brewers' Union. They objected to the motion that was brought before the St. Catharines convention by Delegate Edward Norman, of London, and Delegate J. G. Scharlach, of Berlin, protesting against prohibition and the reduction of hotel licenses as contributing to unemployment among the brewery workers and others.

Delegate James Ralph, of the local brewery workers, claimed at the

Council meeting that they had not been advised that this motion was to be considered and he thought that this was not a favorable time to make any move against the reduction of licenses, especially without taking all the organizations into confidence. As the Labor Educational Association could hardly hold itself responsible for any motion that might be brought in, and as this motion was tabled, it is unfortunate that it should be made the reason for a general attack on the Association which has done some very good work in the labor interests.

AS TO UNEMPLOYMENT.

It is agreed on every hand that spring has not brought about the reduction of unemployment that was expected. The building trades are the most seriously affected, and the builders' laborers have, somewhat less than 30 per cent. of employment. War orders have given most of the skilled workers outside the building trades plenty of work, and agriculture was never in so promising a condition. The local machinists are all busy, and their business agent always has some jobs on hand at the union rate of wages.

LABOR BUREAUS.

It has been suggested by members of the labor unions that in any

attempt to establish employment bureaus throughout the Province the machinery that the unions themselves have built up might well be used. Every local is already a small, but effective, employment bureau for the men of the trade, and a great deal of money and organization could be saved by combining them into one labor bureau, which could be made to include unskilled and non-union men as well. The union business agents could continue to look after their particular trade, but the general employment bureau would be closely connected with the labor organization and would be administered by the Government.

Another suggestion is, that a beginning should be made in Unemployment Insurance, and that the machinery that some of the unions already have should be used for that purpose. The Typographical Union has probably done more in unemployment benefits than any other organization, but many others have done something along this line. It is pointed out that in Ghent, Belgium, a strong system of unemployment insurance has been built up by the civic authorities working through the unions. The method is contributory, and thus everyone in the association is responsible for everyone else.

This scheme might be objected to on the grounds that it tends to strengthen the unions too greatly, but it seems evident that the stronger an organization, is the more amenable to proper regulation and control. It is usually the least organized trades that cause the most difficulty. A crowd of workers with no stake in the country, and no financial or other responsibility, is much less likely to be reasonable and trustworthy than a strong and wealthy union.