

MARKET FOR LABOR

TENDENCY of Women Workers to Take the Places of Men Will be Increased in 1917 and Labor Engaged on Deferrable Works Will be Released.

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For its effect upon the labor market the railroad-building period through which this country recently passed may be likened to a vast sponge. It drew to Canada about 3,000,000 immigrants and so absorbed farm labor that many of our rural districts were seriously depleted. With the approaching completion of the roads in 1913, the consequent slackening of the industries which supplied them, and the full stop in urban development, the workers began to be squeezed out. Immigration declined immediately.

Labor Market Tightened.

Throughout 1916 the labor market tightened almost without interruption. Supply became quite inadequate as enlistments approached the 400,000 mark and as the tide of immigration dried up. On the demand side the abnormal activity in metal manufacturing was intensified, and heavy transportation of troops, munitions and food supplies brought employment in transportation to a maximum. Activity in manufacturing and transportation kept coal mines working to capacity, and as the demand for munitions increased the mining and refining of metallic ores employed more and more labor. Even building revived somewhat as munition manufacturers made extensions to plant and transportation companies provided shelter for congested freight.

Reduction of Unemployed.

The closer application of the labor force as 1916 advanced is indicated by the accompanying tables. The first table shows from returns furnished the statistical branch of the Department of Labor by trade unions, the percentages of their membership unemployed on three different dates. This indicates fairly accurately the trend of the skilled labor market.

as trade unionists are in the main skilled workpeople.

Occupations of trade Unions Reporting.	Per Cent. of Members Unemployed on :		
	Dec. 30, 1915.	June 30, 1916.	Sept. 30, 1916.
Manufacturing and mechanical industries..	3.1	1.1	1.3
Metals, machinery and conveyances.....	.9	.6	.0
Food, tobacco and liquors.....	6.5	4.9	.5
Textiles, carpets and cordage.....	.0	.0	.5
Clothing and laundering	3.3	.6	1.0
Printing, publishing and paper goods.....	3.7	.8	1.2
Leather, boots and shoes and rubber....	.0	.0	.1
Transportation.....	3.0	.5	.5
Steam railways.....	2.4	.5	.6
Street and electric railways.....	2.3	.3	.0
Navigation.....	12.2	2.3	1.1
Building and construction.	25.3	8.6	6.3
Mining and quarrying...	5.9	1.2	.7
Public employment.....	.0	.0	.1
Miscellaneous.....	8.4	3.1	1.9
All occupations.....	8.7	2.1	1.4

From monthly returns supplied by 100 employment bureaus the statistical branch of the Department of Labor has compiled the following table, which shows the trend of the unskilled labor market in 1916, as these bureaus place comparatively few skilled workers:

Month.	Vacancies notified.	Per Cent. of (Number in vacancies Jan.—100.) filled.
	January.....	100
February.....	114	44
March.....	119	55
April.....	143	58
May.....	180	56
June.....	164	59
July.....	202	45
August.....	254	59
September.....	245	39
October.....	215	38
November.....	184	45

Taking the number of vacancies notified in January as 100 the table shows relatively the vacancies notified each month and the percentage of the vacancies filled. Since April the percentage of the demand supplied has declined each month, except in August, when the harvest excursions brought an influx to the west, and in November, when numbers of workers were released from municipal and other outside employments.

Women Workers in Textiles.

Efforts to dilute the labor supply with woman workers were made with varying success, as in some centres woman workers were largely absorbed in textile, garment and boot and shoe factories engaged on army contracts. Some relief came through the release of interned aliens of enemy nationality and the slackening of municipal employment as wages advanced. In British Columbia, too, the increased demand brought several hundred more Japanese and Chinese than in the previous year.

Nineteen hundred and seventeen opens with the demand for recruits and munition makers continuing and with the prospect of further heavy demands from industries speeded up by the war. With no new sources of supply in sight, the features of the labor market in 1917 will probably be: (1) The further dilution of labor by the substitution of unskilled for skilled workmen, as well as by the placing of women workers in men's places; (2) Efforts to release for war work much of the labor force now engaged on deferrable municipal and other public works and in the production and distribution of luxuries.