

UNEMPLOYMENT IS ACUTE PROBLEM

J. S. Woodsworth Gives Lecture, Furnishing Comprehensive Fig- ures—Remedy Necessary.

Startling indications of the extent of the problem of unemployment in the Dominion and the necessity for remedial action were afforded in the course of a comprehensive lecture on the subject of "Unemployment," given by J. S. Woodsworth at the university last evening.

Mr. Woodsworth based his remarks as far as Winnipeg and the west were concerned on the report of the committee of the board of associated charities which met in February last, and the information contained in which was sent up to Ottawa to the Dominion government. The alarming growth of unemployment in the city of Winnipeg was demonstrated in the fact that; while 18 cases of unemployment were relieved in January, 1913, the number had grown to 200 in the same month in 1914. An analysis of the report showed that 40 per cent. of the cases were of English nationality, that about 50 per cent. were unskilled laborers, and that about one-third had been in Canada two years or less. Mr. Woodsworth claimed that the last fact was likely explainable on the ground that numbers of immigrants who first went out to farms left the land and went into the cities, there to swell the ranks of the unemployed.

"Back to the land" was a cry often heard as the panacea of all the ills from which the Dominion suffered. But no such policy in itself was adequate, declared the speaker last evening. Mr. Woodsworth said that he was in a certain western town recently and was told that there were 70 bankrupt farmers in the locality, who were drifting into the city. There were problems in connection with the placing of people on the land which would have to be faced. Government aid in the shape of lower rates of interest and rural credits and the provision for ready-made farms, would have to be provided. The mere getting of the people on to the land would never settle the problem of unemployment.

Not merely in Manitoba, but throughout the Dominion the problem of unemployment was becoming acute. Figures for last winter showed that in Saskatoon there were 450 unemployed, while 300 men left the city, in Moose Jaw the local trades council estimated 1,200 unemployed; in Regina the labor council put the figure at 1,000; in Calgary there were over 1,000 homeless men unemployed, while in Toronto unemployed had registered to the number of 10,000. These conditions promised to be repeated this winter. A recent report from Regina had stated that there were 400 unemployed there already, and in Winnipeg the C. P. R. shops were beginning to shut down on a proportion of the men.

Mr. Woodsworth had something to say on the causes of this undesirable condition of affairs. The fundamental trouble was that Canada had been living on speculation rather than production. "We have been living too extravagantly because British capital has been too easy to get," said the lecturer. The nation had been busy with construction on borrowed capital, and it was now time to turn attention to production.

For the purpose of doing something to remedy the unsatisfactory condition prevailing in the Dominion, it was advised that there should be a registration of unemployed required generally, that government employment bureaus should be provided and private bureaus eliminated, that there should be thorough inspection of conditions of employment on camps and farms, that public work in cities should be concentrated into the winter months as far as possible, and that employers should be encouraged to adjust employment so far as possible to meet seasonal conditions.