

THE UNEMPLOYED

Mr. H. H. Stevens, M.P., recently proposed that Vancouver should solve its unemployment problem by acquiring land outside the city, clearing it, and selling it later to agricultural settlers on favorable terms. The City Council considered the cost of the project excessive and declared that it could not undertake the care of the unemployed of the Province. In consequence The Vancouver World asks if the workless are again to be fed this winter by the ancient and wasteful system of doles from the municipal and Provincial treasuries.

Hon. T. W. Crothers, who has been investigating local conditions on the Coast, wisely advises that the workless be furnished with employment rather than charity. The one preserves and the other tends to destroy the self-reliance and self-respect of the recipients. In taking this position the Minister of Labor has the unanimous support of organized labor. The Minister proposes conferences and co-operation between the municipalities and the Provincial and Dominion Governments, which is the policy advocated for months past by The Daily News.

The Victoria Colonist thinks that the country must discover the causes of recurring periods of unemployment and provide a remedy. These are issues upon which the Ontario Unemployment Commission has presented an interim report, and upon which it is still working with a view to more definite recommendations. The same paper suggests that much good will be achieved if wage-earners have an opportunity of producing something for themselves — in tilling garden city lots, for instance—after their day's work for their employers. "During the past two years in Victoria hundreds of persons have been producing food for themselves. They must necessarily have been able to expend more money than they otherwise could in purchasing the product of the labor of others." It is argued that in this way those who have work can contribute materially to the relief of local unemployment.

The Provincial Government at Victoria has rejected a proposal that it should provide work for the unemployed by employing them in the cultivation of unutilized areas and paying them a wage of a dollar a day. Substantially the plan was that the Government should provide work for those who need it at a minimum living wage. It contemplated that the Government would be recouped in part, at least, by the sale of crops raised through the labor thus secured. In opposing the scheme, The Colonist argued that its cost was prohibitive, and that it would permanently commit the Province to a new field of activity.

The Colonist said: "The fact that it was proposed to employ men in work that would be to a certain extent remunerative does not materially affect the statement that so to employ men at a minimum living wage would mean the recognition by the community of an obligation to provide every person needing it employment at a living wage. We are quite aware that some people will claim such an obligation exists. But is it not true that, if we once admit this, we must also concede it to be the duty of one part of the community to support another part? If that is conceded, will it be denied that such a policy would have a tendency to make men shiftless, unthrifty and unenterprising?"

The same paper states that the real remedy for unemployment is to be found in the creation of industries. It concludes: "We are, of course, not arguing against straight relief work. Occasions arise when this is necessary and any Government, deserving of public confidence, would under such conditions provide it. A great deal of such work has already been provided in this Province. We think we are safe in saying that the Pro-

vincial Government and most of the municipalities have done all they are able to do in this way."

It is difficult to follow The Colonist's reasoning. In the face of a serious emergency, demanding concrete action, it raises what must be regarded as rather technical objections. Its attitude is one of singularly detached hopelessness and impotence. Not in that direction does any help lie. What is required for the approaching winter is the replacing of charity funds to, as great an extent as possible with such work as can be provided by municipalities and Governments. The deserving unemployed will rejoice at the opportunity to earn their own living, and the undeserving who refuse to work should be sent to municipal or Government institutions, where compulsory labor is the rule. Fortunately in nearly, if not every part, of the Dominion the pressure of unemployment will be less severe than either last winter or the winter before. We may even be approaching a period when the demand for skilled labor will exceed the supply.