

The Unemployed

On July 20th, a special meeting of the Union of Canadian Municipalities will be held at Niagara Falls to consider municipal problems that have arisen through the war; the principal one being that of unemployment, which is now having a serious effect on the progress of our cities. Last month, as a consequence of a meeting of Mayors at Ottawa, who presented a memorial to the Government urging that a commission be appointed, we gave an analysis of the situation as we understood it. We have since been given to understand that the Government is desirous of knowing the exact number of unemployed in the cities, with their classification, for it appears that the statistics of unemployed at the Department of Labor—showing approximately 57,000—do not corroborate the figures of the municipal delegation, which claimed over 33,000 in the prairie provinces alone. How the Department of Labor gathers its statistics we do not know, but if 57,000 represent all the unemployed in Canada, something must be wrong, as the figures we have in this office—as the result of inquiries sent out in November last by the U. C. M.—appear to show that the department is very much out of it. In thirty cities over 100,000 were out of work then, and the number has increased considerably since, in spite of the war orders. Perhaps the opening of the navigation and other summer occupations may alleviate the situation for a short time. But to get fairly accurate figures at the present moment, the U. C. M. has again sent out a form of enquiry, which we urge the municipalities to fill up and return as soon as possible, so that a working basis can be formed on which to build up a better system of employment.

The unemployment problem may be divided for practical purposes into two classes—agricultural and industrial. At the congress of mayors, principally Western, the agricultural problem, as it affects the cities, was more or less thrashed out, and the conclusions embodied in the government memorial. The industrial problem has yet to be worked out. This will be the more difficult of the two, for there will be no question of harvest to act even as a temporary relief. Even this industrial aspect can be solved if commensurate measures are used. In the memorial, a commission is suggested. It is possible that the Government before appointing one may select a commissioner to bring together responsible representatives of the federal and provincial governments, of the principal cities, and of the captains of industry, and the leaders of labor, for a round table conference. It must not be forgotten, as constantly pointed out by the Ottawa authorities that the Provincial governments are the sponsors for the municipalities, and it is very evident that the Cabinet, before they make a move will want to know exactly where the Federal Government stands, and how far it will be backed up in thus creating a precedent. This is quite right, though, as pointed out in our statement of last month the federal government has a direct responsibility in some of the causes of unemployment. We understand that the Minister of Labor, at the instigation of the leaders of labor, tried to bring about such a conference last October, but his overtures failed, probably because the seriousness of the situation had not been brought home to those responsible. Be that as it may be, the burden

that the municipalities now have to bear, is largely because of this shifting of responsibility. This must be ended, for there is a grave responsibility on each of the three groups of authorities concerned, and they must immediately come together and apportion the burden. Not even the North America Act is going to save either the Federal or provincial governments from the moral responsibility of their share in taking care of the tens of thousands now walking the streets, have nothing to do.

The unemployed problem in Canada is a serious one, and must be handled without gloves if a solution is to be attained. The municipalities, without being the cause, bear the effects of it. Part only of the responsibility is theirs, which they have not only taken up, have also had to carry that of the provincial and federal authorities. Systematization and concord would make each of these shares a comparatively light one and attain permanent advantages.

TRADE EXPANSION.

At the coming meeting of the U.C.M. the executive will take up a subject under the title of "Policy towards Germany and Austria," which at first sight would seem outside the province of the municipalities, but as the idea is to discuss ways and means of creating more trade in Canada, as a means of relieving the unemployment strain now on the Councils, by finding a market for the labor on their hands, we cannot help but congratulate the executive on their courage in taking up the subject. We firmly believe that a frank discussion will do much to show our municipal executives that within their respective cities is the potentiality of a prosperity they did not know, and which they ought not to leave entirely to the Boards of Trade.

THE LATE MAYOR RATHWELL OF LACHINE, P. Q.

It is with deep regret that we publish the sudden death of the Mayor of Lachine, P.Q. which took place June 12 while he was walking in his garden. The cause of death was heart failure. Those who had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Rathwell at the Sherbrooke convention of the U. C. M. when he represented his city, found in the Mayor one of the most courteous of men and one who took a keen interest in the proceedings. Elected eight years ago as an alderman, in 1911 the citizens promoted him to the mayoralty of his native municipality—where he was born fifty years ago. His work both as alderman and mayor took up all his spare time; he taking advantage of every opportunity for the betterment of the community. A splendid business man—he was manager of Dawes' brewery, a position he had risen to from office boy—the late Mr. Rathwell introduced business methods into the proceedings of the Council, and his successor will have a hard task to keep up the standard of efficiency he set his colleagues. Our sympathy goes out to the city council of Lachine in the loss of a valuable colleague, and to his family in the loss of one of the best of men and fathers, and to his city which is deprived of a faithful friend and protector.

The successor to the late Mayor Rathwell is Alderman L. A. Amos.