

THE CONFERENCE OF CHARITIES AND CORRECTIONS.

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The recent conference of charities and corrections held at Winnipeg was a notable gathering. It was a splendid successor to the conference of 1912, held in Montreal in connection with the Child's Welfare Exhibit. The conference, which had limped and sighed, with amateur knowledge and provincial aims, has thus enjoyed two years of vigorous health. Its outlook has grown national, and its discussions show the same qualities of breadth, courage and fairness which have won for the corresponding organization in the United States, the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, the great influence it wields.

One of the most valuable addresses was given by Mr. W. R. Leiserson, superintendent of the Industrial Commission of the State of Wisconsin. His subject was Public Employment Offices, or, as they are called in Britain, Labor Exchanges. Four of these offices are maintained in Wisconsin, and, since Mr. Leiserson took charge, with excellent results. His address was an instructive practical study of the problem of unemployment. Pointing out that labor is a commodity to be bought and sold like any thing else he affirmed that present day methods of dealing in labor were a century behind other industrial exchanges. The manless job and the jobless man are being brought together much as if city merchants closed their fine stores and peddled their goods from door to door.

He held that an Employment Office should not try to furnish jobs but information; that its work was a business proposition and not a charity, and that it should be done as a public utility because no private employment agency can maintain the reputation of being impartial and command the confidence both of employers and the labor unions.

Discussing the question of unemployment on broad lines he asserted that it was a problem of maladjustment, either in respect of place, or between industries, or of time. So far as the difficulty is caused by the first of these, the agency, by furnishing information as to where labor is in demand, obviously holds the key to the riddle. The second phase, of maladjustment between industries is to be dealt with at the point where the boy is transferred from the school world to the man world. He needs vocational guidance there, and the Juvenile Employment Office exists to direct him into a calling for which he is suited and which opens into the future. For the third phase, that of seasonal activity, he declared that nothing but a system of insurance will suffice. Here we touch one of our sharpest labor troubles in Canada, where northern winters prevail. We need to adopt some phase by which the plasterer or stonemason may provide during his eight months season of work for his four months enforced idleness. Such an insurance scheme cannot operate successfully without a work-test. The employment office furnishes that. Its records will show whether or not the applicant is worthy. And thus the Public Employment Office is an essential contributor to the "out-of-work" problem in all of its three phases.

The largest assemblage of the conference was on the evening when Rev. W. B. Findlay, Superintendent of the Toronto Farm for Delinquents, and Hon. W. J. Hanna, Provincial Secretary of Ontario, told the thrilling story of the experiments in rational treatment of criminals which have been begun near Toronto, Guelph and other places. Mr. Hanna's account of the gradual development and transformation of methods of punishing crime held as in a spell an audience which packed the vast convention hall. At first a score of convicts who had been immured in the Central Prison, guarded by high walls and loaded rifles, were taken into the open country and set at farming. Gradually five-sixths of the 600

prisoners have followed, and are now farming, making bricks and building dormitories.

Sixty men were set to work, with what would seem farcial supervision, at Mimico. Just over the fence lie the Grand Trunk yards with ideal facilities for escaping. These released men held a meeting and decided: "If any man of this bunch tries to queer this proposition, we'll queer him."

Of one hundred men near Whitby not one attempted to escape during the first thirteen months. Two escaped at a later time and were recaptured.

Eight hundred acres were purchased at Guelph. The men were employed at ploughing, quarrying, and building the structures in which they were to be confined. It was intended ultimately to surround the farm with an unscalable stone wall. That project has been abandoned. Experience has shown that the chief restraint upon the prisoners is the absence of the wall.

"Why don't you run away?" said Mr. Hanna to a convicted man ploughing alone in a field half a mile from a guard. "Why don't you run away?" If you had ten minutes start from the central prison you would put a mile behind you. Here you have a start of half a day. Why don't you take it?"

"If we were locked in at night," the man replied "we would take it?"

It is confidently expected that, within a year, the prison population of Ontario will be self-respecting, with something over to distribute among the prisoners or their families.

Surely this is wiser than the old way. Reform is a better healer of crime than retribution. To make an erring human being into a man you must treat him as a man. Put him on his honor and you beget honor within him. Give him good food, human comradeship, clothing which is not a badge of shame, productive work to do in the open air which leaves him healthily tired at night, and a chance to earn his parole and you are likely to make him a good citizen. The old way hardened him in crime. The French thieves slang for goal is "college," meaning a school of crime. The movement to make it a better kind of college has begun. There is a world of significance in the change which prisoners make in the colloquial expression for escaping. In the goal corridors they call it "making a getaway." On the farm they call it "taking a sneak."

This gathering was, as its name implies, a conference only. Its object is the enlightenment of its members and the public, not the passing of resolutions or engaging in propaganda. Thus the founding of the Canadian Welfare League is to be regarded as incidental to the conference. Its work and methods will be distinct, but it will possess the same personnel, and will be in reality the striking arm of the Conference. The League's headquarters in Winnipeg, and its secretary is Mr. J. S. Woodsworth, recently superintendent of All people's Mission in that city. Its programme reads, in part:—

"To promote a general interest in all forms of social welfare; to make a practical study of Canada's emergent social problems caused by our large and heterogenous immigration; in each community to federate or otherwise organize for co-operative work existing social institutions so that each may give the community more efficient service; to enlist our citizens in personal service for the common welfare and provide trained leadership for social work."

NEW SECURITIES.

Since the year opened, English people have been asked to subscribe to \$733,000,000 of new securities offered on the London market. That is more than they were asked to take up to the middle of September in 1912 and 1911, but it compared with a total of \$1,050,000,000 offered in that period of 1910.