

## A Joint Meeting on Unemployment

The war is now on its thirteenth month, and though we Britishers and our Allies have actually grown stronger in fighting strength (begotten of a determination to see the thing through) Canada has had to contend with a nightmare of actual and prospective unemployment. It has been, and is, our duty, in consequence, to make serious attempts to bring about some practical solution of this grave problem. So far, as already stated in these columns, the burden has rested on the municipalities, and they, with the help of private philanthropy, have managed to relieve the situation during last winter, and even up to this date. But they cannot go on any longer fighting alone. The Federal government has as yet done nothing direct, although recruiting and alien camps have aided a little. The provincial governments have done nothing, though the responsibility is partially theirs. The Minister of Labor in the early part of the war did attempt to bring about a meeting of provincial, civic, trade and labor representatives, but did not succeed. This was not the minister's fault, but rather a lack of sense of responsibility on the part of those to whom he sent the invitation. They did not then realize the seriousness of the situation. They should do so now, however, for the outlook for the coming winter is very grave indeed, even should the war end before, so that the position must be squarely faced at once. But by whom? Our suggestion is this; that the only way to bring about any solution is to first get together, at a round table conference, all those responsible—which means everybody having the control of labor—public authorities, employers and labor leaders.

Last May, in answer to a memorial on the subject from the Mayors, together with a request asking for a commission, the Prime Minister recognised the need for speedy action and said that the cabinet would seriously consider the matter, but so far nothing has been done; at least we have no record. Of course we fully appreciate the three great difficulties in the way of a federal commission. First, that the government's great immediate task is to bring the war to a successful conclusion; second, the British North America Act, which sets the Federal government somewhat far from the municipalities; third, a commission is usually a slow process. So that it seems to us the only way to bring about a solution of the unemployment question quickly is to put into practice Mr. D. Light-hall's resolution adopted by the meeting of the U.C.M. which reads as follows:—

**"That this Executive Committee of the Union of Canadian Municipalities shall press for the organization by the City Council in each large city, and by the Provincial Governments, of a Joint Committee on Unemployment to consist of two or more special delegates from each of the following bodies: The Dominion Government, the Provincial Governments, the City Councils, the Board of Trades, the Manufacturers' Association, and representatives of labor and the principal Charity Boards, with the object of working on a harmonious plan for dealing with this question practically during the coming winter."**

This resolution is the result of much previous consideration by the Union during the year.

We believe that the findings of such a conference would have a great effect because of the distribution of responsibility; but the representatives must be got together first. This will mean hard work on the part of the executive—to get the co-ordination of so many opposing elements, but there is no reason for the failure of the venture. Each element is sensible of the necessity for immediate action, if only for Canada's credit, which has certainly not been strengthened by the drain to our civic and national treasuries. Men walking the streets do not build up credit for any country, and in the case of Canada it is not all the war which is the cause. There is something wrong somewhere, and it is only by bringing together those who can do something that the wrong can be righted.

The Union of Canadian Municipalities in its attempt to bring about a meeting is at least doing something and it is up to the federal and provincial authorities to help. We have every confidence in securing the support of the ministers of labor and agriculture for they have given their word, and one or two of the provinces have already shown their interest, but every provincial government must do its duty by taking up its share of the work. We can vouch for the municipalities.

### NATIONAL MUNICIPAL LEAGUE.

The National Municipal League has announced nine subjects for the 1915 Morton Denison Hull prize of \$250 for the best essay on a subject connected with municipal government. The contest is open to post-graduate students who, within a year, have been registered students in any college giving instruction in municipal government. Further information regarding the prize may be had of the National Municipal League, 703 North American Building, Philadelphia, Pa.

### MUNICIPAL PENSIONS.

Considerably more than 100 per cent increase in five years in the amount of pensions paid public employees of five Massachusetts cities, is sufficiently formidable a statement to make the probable increase in another five years appear to be a subject for grave consideration. The amount paid in pensions in 1914 by Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, Lynn and Worcester, amounted to \$644,130.38 as against \$272,661.10 in 1910. One of these cities paid out four times as much as in 1910, another 40 times as much, and still another 60 times as much. These and other interesting and attention-compelling figures and facts have been brought out by the investigations the chamber's special committee on contributory pension plan is making.

It would seem that the huge increases are not due so much to larger amounts paid either to individuals or to the employees collectively in any department or departments. The soaring figures, on the other hand, are to be accounted for by the admission one after another of new departments to the benefits of pension system. As for example, one city carrying pensioners, only of its fire department in 1910, now pays pensions to employees of the police, school, sewer, street, water and city messenger departments. Another has increased the departments benefitted under its pension system, from three in 1910 to 13 in 1915. One city pensioned employees of two of its departments in 1910; in 1914 nine departments were included in the pension budget.

The chamber's committee aims to acquaint the general public with the situation regarding the municipal pension system—its present and estimated future cost to the municipalities of the state. The committee is also trying to discover whether or not the payment of so large an amount of public money for this purpose makes for increased efficiency on the part of municipal employees.—Boston Chamber of Commerce.