

## Dominion Labor Exchanges

What is lacking is some means of bringing the manless job and the jobless man together

By J. W. MACMILLAN.

In the two articles which I have written about the programme which should be adopted in Canada for economic reconstruction after the war I have emphasized the need of a national employment service, as an adjunct of the policies designed to prevent idleness and increase the national well-being. This article is to set forth the case for a thorough and nation-wide system of labor exchanges, operated by the Dominion Government.

That the Government is awake to this need is apparent. Indeed, nothing is more evident than that it deserves more credit than it is generally receiving for grappling with problems novel and insistent beyond any which have heretofore arisen in Canada. Food control, labor control, fuel control are but three of the sharp and trying and puzzling matters which it has addressed itself to, of which previous governments had not so much as heard. There is a great deal of public criticism of the present government, of the "What is it doing" order. Such criticism must necessarily be uninformed, for no one but those who are at the centre of things know either the urgency or the intricacy of the problems of government to-day. Doubtless, such criticisms are fomented by the tension of spirit among the people in these days of battle and sacrifice. They are also fomented, without doubt, by interested persons, who long for the good old days of glorious partisan combats and rich partisan plunderings. Moreover, the government suffers from the lack of any organized publicity activities. Having few enemies it has few defenders. It is well known that public opinion can be formed without the aid of newspapers. Political contests in the United States have shown many occasions where a candidate or a policy won the day in the face of overwhelming newspaper opposition. It might be worth while, for a government which wishes to continue in power, to remember that its good deeds need advertisement if they are to be known.

Yet, we are far short of having adopted a sufficient national policy regarding the distribution of labor. There is, indeed, no margin of the unemployed at the present time, and therefore the immediate necessity does not press hard upon us. But with the closing of the war there will be a sudden transformation of the scene. Munition factories will close overnight. Hundreds of thousands will be thrown out of work. The returning soldiers will require jobs. It is impossible to overdraw, perhaps it is impossible to imagine, the dislocation which industry will suffer. And all our preparations in the way of providing work will be hampered and baffled unless we possess the machinery for rapid and precise distribution of labor.

Even apart from extraordinary conditions arising from the declaration of peace we shall be back again to a normal state of things which demands nothing less than such a system of labor exchanges. The old, recurrent cycles of expansion and depression will return, with the depression first to come. The phenomena of 1913 and of 1908 will be repeated in 1920, more largely and poignantly. The question of the labor turnover will be keenly felt. It often requires the "hiring and firing" of more employees than are at any one time on the payroll of a plant to keep that plant in operation. This, too, will be felt more severely during the reconstruction period. And one of the chief causes both of the cyclical recurrence of good times and bad times and of the wasteful labor turnover is to be found in the mal-distribution of labor. Left to itself, without sufficient information, without intelligent direction, at the mercy of commercial employment agencies, it wanders confused and harassed, to its own hurt and embitterment.

The natural unit of labor distribution is national, as I pointed out in a preceding article. The natural authority then is the Dominion Government. Nothing less than the authoritative co-ordination of labor migrations, with foresight and intelligence, will deliver us from the loss and hardship inevitable when labor is left without guidance.

In Britain there is a thorough system of labor exchanges in co-operation with the trades unions, and with the assistance of volunteer advisory boards in each geographical centre. Such an advanced programme is beyond the industrial stage to

which Canada has attained. We may perhaps learn more from the United States, where the conditions are more like our own.

The Federal Employment Service of the United States has been developed during the present year. Its friends and champions desire its extension far beyond the limits which it has attained, and their hopes are encouraged by the success which it has achieved in the fields which it has touched, and by the general approval of its efforts. It is spending during the current year an appropriation of three-quarters of a million dollars. It has amalgamated such federal and state employment services as already existed, and bent them to the one purpose. It has occupied strategic points throughout all the Republic, having over five hundred bureaus in operation scattered through about fifty states. It has taken charge, for the most part, of the administration of the "work or fight" laws which the several states have enacted. It has taken over the hiring of all railroad labor west of a line drawn through Buffalo and Pittsburgh. How much this means may be seen from the fact that the private commercial employment agencies have been accustomed to place a hundred thousand men each year from Chicago alone. It has taken over the hiring of all unskilled workers in war factories, and intends to go on to the hiring of skilled workers as well.

The method of accomplishing this handling of the war workers may be shown from the details of the launching of the scheme in New York state. Mr. C. B. Barnes, who had been the official in charge of the employment agencies operated by the state of New York, was named as Federal State superintendent. Fourteen districts were created within the state. In each of these a "community board" was organized to assist in the distribution of the unskilled labor. Members of these community boards were chosen from the ranks of employers and organized labor. Part of the duty of these boards is winning the co-operation of employers in non-essential industries, whose employees may be drafted away from them.

Over these district community boards there is an advisory board for the whole state. It also is formed of representatives chosen from employers and labor unions. It acts as a clearing house for the community boards.

Private employment agencies all over the state were notified that they must cease from placing labor with factories doing war work. They received the following notice:

"You are hereby prohibited from accepting any order for any kind of unskilled

MR. A. D. FRASER, who died a few days ago, was one of Montreal's best known business men. He was head of the grocery firm of Fraser Viger and Company, was an ex-Alderman of the city of Montreal, and prominent in commercial affairs. He was born in Kildare, Ireland, in 1852, and came with his parents to this country as a child.

COLONEL GRANT, who has been in charge of the American offices in Montreal for the past few months, has been transferred to Omaha, where he will have charge of an important military district. Colonel Grant, who by the way is a Canadian by birth, has been a member of the United States regular army for a great many years, seeing service in the Philippines and other places. He is regarded as a particularly efficient officer, and while in Montreal did a lot of very excellent work in directing the embarkation of American soldiers.

LIEUT.-COL. FRED WHITE, who died in Ottawa a few days ago was well known to the public as the Comptroller of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police. Colonel White deserves special commendation, as he was the organizer of the Mounted Police. Away back in 1876, in conjunction with Colonel Bernard, he organized the force, and two years later was made Comptroller. Under his direction the Mounted Police became known as the ablest and most effective semi-military organization in the world. Colonel White also served as

male workers from any firm within or without the State of New York, doing work, directly or indirectly, for the United States Government. Any orders of this kind received by fee-charging employment agencies must be referred to the nearest office of the United States Employment Service."

The private agencies are also required to work under permits from the Federal Employment service in recruiting unskilled labor for other employments.

One of the suggestions I cited in a recent article was that female labor in Canada should be worked into the war factories, and male labor worked out of them into the more permanent industries. One can see how effective such a system of government employment agencies could be in working such a policy through.

Chicago has had a fruitful experience during the last few years in regard to employment agencies. It is only three years since, after a hot campaign in state politics, the control of the free employment bureaus of the state was wrested from the hands of the political spoilers. While these gentry controlled them they were trusted neither by employers nor by laboring men. When the rescue had been effected an advisory board was named by the governor, of non-partisan and disinterested persons, and they became of invaluable service to both employers and workers. These state bureaus were taken over by the Federal Employment Service early in the present year. Their first act, under the new management, was to prove that the "labor shortage" cry was fallacious. There were, it was discovered, enough workers seeking employment to fill all the demands of the war industries. What had been lacking was some means of bringing the manless job and the jobless man together. Under the former uncentralized and competitive system of distributing labor through private agencies everybody had believed that there was a shortage of labor. The first essay of a competent labor service proved that there was no such thing. But, how much the out-of-works must have suffered in their ignorance, and how much the predatory loafers could profit by the prevalence of such a belief!

Prof. Graham Taylor, who was one of the first members of the Illinois advisory board, comments on the results of the Federal Employment Services as follows:

"They should lead to a very prompt and thorough effort by all the state and federal authorities involved to develop and standardize a country-wide employment service that will prove adequate to meet the war's emergent demands upon industry not only, but to provide in advance for the re-employment of the returning soldiers as the army is demobilized. Thus the problem of employment will be recognized as that of the nation demanding a permanent national policy and means and management thoroughly adequate to carry it out."

Uncle Sam has become quite a detective. Ever since the United States got into the war, they have been unearthing German plots and publishing them at the moment when their publication would do the most good. Recently they exposed the Bolshevik-German plots in Russia. The men primarily responsible for this was E. G. Sisson, a well-known American newspaper man who was sent to Russia by the Committee of Public Information some two years ago. It was while spending those two years in Russia that he unearthed the plots, and brought out the documentary proof with him. Sisson served on Chicago daily papers, then became editor of *Colliers*, and later of the *Cosmopolitan*.

BRIGADIER-GENERAL W. A. LOGIE, who has been appointed judge in succession to the late Judge Leitch, has had a somewhat eventful career since the outbreak of the war. Always a military man, his interest in soldiering almost rivalled the time he put on his legal work. At the outbreak of the war he threw himself whole-heartedly into the cause, and for the past three years he has been Officer Commanding the Toronto district, the most fruitful recruiting spot in Canada. General Logie practised his profession at Hamilton, and was well known as a lawyer.

private secretary to the late Sir John A. Macdonald, and in other ways proved himself an efficient civil servant. He was born in Birmingham, England, in 1847.

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