

HEARST MEETS LABOR PARADE

Unemployed Ask for Employment, Which Premier Promises

BIG WORKS PLANNED

Situation at Present Acute, but Better Times Are in Sight

Co-operation of the Government in alleviating what they declared was becoming an acute unemployment situation in Toronto, was asked of Sir William Hearst and his colleagues by a deputation of the Trades and Labor Council yesterday afternoon. The Prime Minister, in turn, told the deputation that they were entitled to the co-operation of the Administration, and that it would be given to the best ability of the Government.

The deputation was composed of leaders in the Trades and Labor movement in the city, who had previously addressed a mass meeting in Queen's Park of about 1,500, of whom between 40 and 50 per cent. were foreigners. The speakers were Mr. Arthur O'Leary, President of the Trades and Labor Council; H. Lewis of the Metal Workers, Frank Watkinson of the Building Trades, Mr. Mollineux, John Sutherland of the Trades and Labor Council, and Wm. Hevey, Secretary of the Trades and Labor Council. The members of the Government, in addition to the Prime Minister, who received the deputation, were Hon. I. B. Lucas, Attorney-General, and Hon. F. G. Macdarmid, Minister of Public Works, under whose direction is the Labor Department of the Provincial Administration.

Speed Public Works.

Mr. Watkinson urged the Government to speed up the work on buildings which it had been intimated would be gone on with this season. When employers failed to supply work, Labor naturally turned to legislative bodies to provide a remedy. He specified the Whitby Hospital as one institution that could be proceeded with, as well as the proposed addition to the Parliament Buildings. Replying to questions of the Prime Minister, Mr. Watkinson said about 50 per cent. of those out of work were unskilled laborers. Fifteen to 20 per cent. of the members of the building trades were out of work, whereas the usual percentage of unemployed at this time of the year was 5 to 8. Eighty per cent. of the members of their union who were out of work, he believed, would accept such work as concrete construction.

Replying to the deputation, Sir William Hearst promised that the requested co-operation would be given. The situation was difficult for the present and would remain so for a few weeks, although he believed conditions would then change very quickly. Statistics compiled by the Trades and Labor Branch showed improvement in the situation. In November, before the termination of the war had caused a depression, labor bureaus in Toronto were able to place 62 per cent. of those asking for positions. In December the percentage dropped to 45 per cent., in January to 43 per cent., but in February it jumped to 58 per cent. and for the first half of March it was 61 per cent.

Much Employment Coming.

The Government, Sir William said, will be able to develop its works very

much to enlarge the opportunities for employment. The additions to the University of Toronto would not have been gone on with this year, except for the unemployment problem. The money was provided for the University on the distinct understanding that the work would be speeded up. The number of men employed at Whitby Hospital will be increased as soon as possible, he said. Large amounts of money were being provided for the various Government institutions. He pointed out in reply to Mr. Hevey that it was impossible for the Government to step in in Toronto and build houses. That was for the municipality.

Sir William referred also to the extension of the T. & N. O., the work to be done by the Hydro-electric Power Commission of Ontario, and on the highway system. "Toronto is the storm centre of unemployment in the Province," declared Sir William. "It is where the great difficulty exists. Men congregate here. Toronto cannot absorb all these men, and there will have to be a disbursement in order to find work." Even now the Labor Department had applications for laborers for work outside of Toronto.

In conclusion, the Prime Minister said the Government would urge upon the various departments the need for speeding up on all works.

Socialists Busy.

About two thousand of the unemployed; with a few soldiers and an occasional woman, attended the meeting in Queen's Park prior to the deputation waiting on the Government. As was anticipated by officials of the central body of trades unionists, the Socialists took advantage of the gathering to distribute literature. A number of them stood on the outskirts of the crowd with bundles of pamphlets, and later, when the deputation left the bandstand to meet the Cabinet in the Parliament Buildings, held forth advising the unemployed to let the landlord worry for his rent and the food speculator worry for his food in storage.

There was a large squad of police present when the unemployed commenced to gather in front of the Parliament Buildings. Police Inspector Geddes had with him several police Inspectors, a large number of constables and plainclothesmen. It was apparent that the police were prepared for any trouble. The gathering, however, was of a very orderly character.

President Arthur O'Leary of the Trades Council; its Secretary, Mr. W. J. Hevey, and Messrs. Frank Watkinson, John Sutherland, Thomas Molyneux and Herbert Lewis addressed the meeting, when it was requested that it move from the front of the buildings to the bandstand in the rear.

Declares Situation Serious.

Mr. Lewis declared that the situation was serious, and had to be dealt with in a serious manner. The unemployed, he said, desired immediate action, and it was useless any longer to talk of the good things which were coming in "the sweet by and by." There were many soldiers returning from overseas, and the only solution of the problem was a six-hour day and a thirty-three-hour week with a minimum wage.

Thomas Molyneux pointed out that the average worker earned \$750 a year, according to figures in daily newspapers, during war-time, and that he produced \$2,000 worth of goods. Someone was making a huge profit out of Labor, and while there was unemployment the surplus wealth being held for markets should be turned over to the workers who produced it. John Sutherland said that the crowd was larger than expected, and that the trades unions were looking for action, not promises, from the Government.