

Annotations.

THE UNEMPLOYED PROBLEM.

The report of the Special Committee of the Council of the Charity Organisation Society on the subject of the relief of distress, due to want of employment, has been issued, and contains some useful suggestions. The Committee inquired into the measures adopted last winter for the relief of the unemployed and for meeting unusual distress. Amongst other relief schemes it had under consideration the proposals made by Mr. Long, President of the Local Government Board, and the Committee expresses its thanks for the interest he has displayed and the assistance he has rendered by his suggestions; but is of opinion that some of his proposals will lead to a further and dangerous relaxing of the necessary reservations of the Poor Law of 1834.

The Committee proposes that applicants for relief shall be divided into three classes—(1) thrifty and careful men; (2) men of different grades of respectability with a decent home; and (3) the idle, loafing class, or those brought low through drink or vice. To deal with these, committees should be formed in districts where special distress is apprehended, in connection with which there should be a competent staff of paid and voluntary workers to make inquiries and help in the administration of hospital relief. The Committee also recommends that representation be made to the President of the Local Government Board, with a view to an official inquiry (by a Departmental Committee or otherwise) being held into the growth of pauperism and expenditure, and the administration of the Poor Law in the metropolis.

It also considers it desirable that a Voluntary Committee be appointed, consisting of members of the London Chamber of Commerce, employers engaged in business and manufacture, working men engaged in co-operation, members of trade unions, and others, to inquire and report whether by modifications of existing methods of engagement, contract and remuneration, especially in the case of unskilled labour, industry may not be organised on some more stable and beneficial conditions than now prevail.

No Society has a more intimate knowledge of social questions than the Charity Organisation Society. Its report on the unemployed problem is therefore necessarily a valuable one.

THE BRITISH RED CROSS COUNCIL.

Viscount Knutsford, Chairman of the Central British Red Cross Council, is bringing the important question of the organisation of the voluntary aid resources of this country before the public, and is making an appeal for funds, with the object of extending and developing Red Cross organisation on a scale commensurate with the requirements of the country.

The Central British Red Cross Council was started in January, 1899, with the full approval of the War Office, and is now officially recognised by all foreign Chancelleries as the central body authorised to deal with Red Cross matters throughout the Empire.

The functions of the Council are as follows:—

1. To act as the recognised medium of communication with the Red Cross organisations of other countries.
2. To be the medium of official communication between the naval and military authorities and voluntary aid societies and their branches.
3. To promote the extension and organisation of voluntary aid resources throughout the Empire.

Lord Knutsford says that the lessons of the past have shown that schemes not systematised beforehand must necessarily be imperfect under the sudden emergencies of war.

Also that we have learned from experience not only that in the presence of a state of war, money, subscriptions, donations in kind, and offers of personal service have always been freely given, and that an appeal to the public has invariably met with a most generous response, but also that it is absolutely necessary to prepare in advance an organisation capable of dealing with those voluntary offers, if we desire to avoid in the future the misdirection of energy, failure of purpose, and waste of money and material that has occurred, and must inevitably occur, through want of such organisation.

Shortly after the Central British Red Cross Council was established the question was brought under consideration how, in view of wars in which Great Britain is engaged as a belligerent, the arrangement of voluntary aid resources could best be secured in time of peace, whether by district or local committees or otherwise. The outbreak of war in South Africa prevented any progress being made in this direction, but the work has again been taken up, and the Council has now a project in hand.

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