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EDITORIAL.

THE DEMORALISATION OF DOLES.

In the far-off sixties, when work was recognised by the poor, at least in country districts, as the best thing in life, and a fine craftsman, diligent labourer, or thrifty housewife not only maintained their self-respect but the respect of their neighbours, "parish relief" was looked upon as an indelible disgrace—on all-fours with going to gaol. Even half a century later, the word "pauper" grinds the teeth—and yet what is our condition to-day? From highest to lowest, doles are largely sought for, and unblushingly grabbed by men, women and children! The only question is—How much? From the bureaucrat in his office—his toes on the "Turkey" for a few hours daily—to the office boy sucking his cigarette at 11 a.m., we find the meaning and honourable significance of hard work unknown. "Ninepence for fourpence" is now the national reward demanded instead of that contracted for whole time penny! We heard a just man express the opinion recently "that if a man would not earn his grub by the sweat of his brow—much better let him starve," and he added: "That is the most patriotic opinion I have ever dared to express."

Thinking it over, we are bound to own to a certain substratum of sympathy with his point of view, and we eagerly await the policy to be adopted by the Cabinet Committee on Unemployment which is considering a definite plan for State aid and relief works to localities where the dole has done its deadliest. The Cabinet Committee, if it is wise, will further the policy of the National Alliance of Employers and Employed, and secure the co-operation of masters and men in an effort to solve the problem of production and trade revival.

It is now generally agreed that the only real solution of the unemployment problem lies in the stimulation of production and the revival of

trade, and this can only follow the realisation on the part of Labour of the actual facts of the situation. The Alliance has five years' good work behind it, and some of its practical suggestions have already been adopted by the Minister of Labour.

Already bringing together of masters and men, who are appointed to committees on equal terms and in equal numbers, has had encouraging results; and there is no doubt that machinery has been created which will be of the utmost service in bringing about better working arrangements and a useful spirit of co-operation. The Alliance has utilised all its resources in seeking to arrive at the facts of unemployment and the general conditions of industry throughout the country, and this information is now being collated, which is a necessary preliminary to definite action being taken.

If the Government, in any schemes for dealing with unemployment, do not get the employers and trade unionists, both centrally and locally, to take up a position of responsibility, it is the opinion of the Secretary of the Alliance that they are going to have a ghastly failure, and will incur a tremendous responsibility. They may stop riots, but they will not stop bitterness.

The one comforting thought which makes all readers of English history hopeful, is that on many occasions in the past the working man has shown that he is possessed of an unusual amount of common sense. And his admirers believe that already he is losing faith in the specious promises of self-seeking agitators of a new heaven and a new earth; that he realises that his prosperity is bound up with the prosperity of his trade, and that the more he produces by his labour, the more will other workers be able to produce for him. When Capital and Labour finally realise that they must be partners or suicides, there will be no more unemployment doles.

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