What the Workmen's Circle is Doing for its Unemployed Members

By P. GELIEBERT

The more widespread unemployment has become, the more acute and ramified the whole problem has grown. The results which the present unemployment has brought in its wake are beginning to be felt more and more in every nook and corner of our social fabric. Not only do the wage-workers, who are the direct victims of the terribly abnormal situation, feel it, but the middle class and the various philanthropic and cultural institutions are also beginning to realize its implications.

All are beginning to perceive now that unemployment is no longer a purely economic question. It also constitutes a problem for education, for cultural work, for philanthropic relief, for organizational activity.

Thus we see, for example, that many educational institutions have been hard hit by the prevailing unemployment: the Yiddish schools, the Talmud Torahs, and similar institutions have felt the pinch in their budgets allotted for the work. The results which the present unemployment has brought in its wake are beginning to be felt more and more in every city than in previous years; while their income has likewise declined a great deal.

Cultural endeavor has also suffered greatly of late. Owning to the smaller budgets allotted for the work, many organizations and institutions have been forced to organize fewer lectures and otherwise to curtail somewhat this activity.

Philanthropic work has also suffered no little because of the deepening depression. On the one hand, the Workmen's Circle has increased the number of needy persons who have to be provided with some form of relief; on the other hand, there has been a decline in the number of persons who can afford to contribute considerable sums for the relief of the needy. In many large organizations part of their activity has lately been paralyzed. Every organizational activity requires financial means and a keen desire and urge to carry on the work. The depression has robbed many an organization of both of these resources: the financial means have shrunk, while the worry about to-day and the uncertainty about to-morrow have deprived many of the active workers of the will to continue their voluntary work in their respective organizations.

Quite recently the problem of unemployment became acute in the fraternal orders. Here the problem has been very serious and assumed wholly different forms. Every fraternal order puts forth first of all the motto of mutual aid: having an institution in which members, in need or distress, could find relief and a place in which to return to normal life. By the rise of the depression, the situation became quite different. It was no longer a question of aiding individual members in this or that city, in this or that region; the demand for relief assumed a mass-character. The larger the organization, the greater the demand for help. Among the fraternal orders unemployment created a double problem. On the one hand, the leaders of these organizations felt that they must provide the necessary relief for their members, since mutual aid is the very foundation of such an organization. On the other hand, it was evident that, unless immediate relief were given to needy members, not only would the members themselves suffer, but the organization would ultimately lack for members. If one looks over the list of fraternal orders and compares their membership rosters for the last few years, one sees that many of them have lost a considerable number of members.

In the case of the Workmen's Circle, which is the largest labor fraternal order in America, the gravity of the problem was felt no less than in that of other fraternal organizations. On the one hand, the Workmen's Circle has increased the number of needy persons who have to be provided with some form of relief; on the other hand, there has been a decline in the number of persons who can afford to contribute considerable sums for the relief of the needy. In many large organizations part of their activity has lately been paralyzed. Every organizational activity requires financial means and a keen desire and urge to carry on the work. The depression has robbed many an organization of both of these resources: the financial means have shrunk, while the worry about to-day and the uncertainty about to-morrow have deprived many of the active workers of the will to continue their voluntary work in their respective organizations.

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Every fraternal order puts forth first of all the motto of mutual aid. In normal times these fraternal organizations did not have to worry about fulfilling their obligation to the members. If a small percent, of the members was in need of help, the organization's treasury was always rich enough to render such assistance. If there was not enough in the treasury, there were always individual members or groups of members who could solve the problem. But with the coming of the depression, the situation became quite different. It was no longer a question of aiding individual members in this or that city, in this or that region; the demand for relief assumed a mass-character. The larger the organization, the greater the demand for help. Among the fraternal orders unemployment created a double problem. On the one hand, the leaders of these organizations felt that they must provide the necessary relief for their members, since mutual aid is the very foundation of such an organization. On the other hand, it was evident that, unless immediate relief were given to needy members, not only would the members themselves suffer, but the organization would ultimately lack for members. If one looks over the list of fraternal orders and compares their membership rosters for the last few years, one sees that many of them have lost a considerable number of members.

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Emergency Unit Training Courses

By Ruth S. Rosenfeld

MANY things have happened as a direct result of the present financial situation; many adjustments have been necessary. The employer who was "always able to get a job" in the past has found himself job-hunting unsuccessfully. Where formerly a thorough knowledge of one kind of work was all that was needed to become incorporated, the situation is now considerably more difficult. "White collar people"—"not enough jobs"—"try some other kind of job was an assurance of steady work, it became impossible. The employee who was "always able to make a study of a large group of Jewish unemployed and how to re-equip these people to give them a new start education in New York City. It is interesting to note that coincident with this experiment, similar pieces of work are being carried out in other parts of the country.

In January the Emanuel Federated Employment Service, at the request of the Welfare Council Coordinating Committee, undertook a bold venture to meet the emergency. Organized the Emergency Unit Training Courses, an experiment in adult education, at the East Side Continuation School. Before the school opened its doors to these new students the Emanuel Federated Employment Service held a meeting to which it invited the representatives of the various cooperating agencies, and at which these agencies were urged to send these unemployed who felt they would profit by the proposed scheme of training. The Welfare Council sent out circulars explaining the whole idea and on and after January 12 we were at the school to greet these new students, who were of course referred to us by social agencies, to discuss with them individual problems, or new ideas for training which they or we might suggest. Throughout the work of the Committee on Trade and Job Studies of the Emanuel Federated Employment Service, we have worked closely with the social agencies in developing the plans for the school.

As a result of our experiment, certain outstanding facts present themselves. We are firmly convinced that there is a need in our educational system for industrial schools for adults; adapted to their needs, with flexibility as to time and program schedules. We need more vocational guidance and testing, particularly for adults. We need more information available to give to the man who comes to us regarding the opportunities open to him. We know that power machine operators can be placed; that there are always more people than there are jobs, and that there is an ever-supply of commercial workers. When men of forty tell us that they have been salesmen, insurance agents, Italian lawyers, or bank correspondents, that they have lost all their money or jobs, we are at a loss to tell them where the opportunities for them exist and what type of work they should turn to. They realize that the white collar job is too uncertain and they are willing to work in a new trade or to be assistant cooks at a school cafeteria. The adult coming back to school does not want to be treated as a child; he needs personal problems, and allowances for his idiosyncrasies. The adult with a real seriousness of purpose but they do not want the discipline of a child's school. They feel that they have been grateful for the feel- ing of separateness from the rest of the school which we have given them and that there has always been some one one not of the school with whom they could discuss their difficulties. As was to be expected, a number of the people sent to us by social agencies were problem individu- als—those who for physical, mental, or social reasons had not adjusted to the life of the community. These people have required special attention on our part. They have needed follow-up, special encouragement, special efforts to aid in placement. Then, too, there has been the payment of the tide-over wage. Among the ninety individuals (out of a total of 797 who registered, received the $6 a week tide-over wage or the payment of $1.50 to cover cafetaria and lunches, the need was much greater. The money for the tide-over wage was made possible by Temple Emanu-El through the efforts of Dr. Nathan Kraus.

In order to keep a close cooperation between the school and the social agencies we have visited each one of these agencies, to discuss with them individual problems, or new ideas for training which they or we might suggest. Through the work of the Committee on Trade and Job Studies of the Emanuel Federated Employment Service, we have had the opportunity to discuss with the social agencies in developing the plans for the school. The adult coming back to school does not want to be treated as a child; he needs personal problems, and allowances for his idiosyncrasies.

The public spirit of the members of the Workmen's Circle was our starting point. From one branch to another, from one end of the country to the other, the Workmen's Circle is now sounding the cry, "Don't let unemployed members be suspended, and help them all you can!" These are merely individual departments, which did everything possible to help members who were out of work, or who were hit by the present abnormal economic situation. Thus, for example, the General Office did not rest content with this written appeal. It addressed a letter to all the branches, exhorting them to do everything within their power to help their unemployed members and not to let them forfeit their membership because of inability to pay dues. But the General Office did not rest content with this written appeal. It also appropriated $5,000 to help cover the dues of jobless members. A few months ago the General Office addressed a letter to all the branches, exhorting them to do everything within their power to help their unemployed members and not to let them forfeit their membership because of inability to pay dues. But the General Office did not rest content with this written appeal. It also appropriated $5,000 to help cover the dues of jobless members.

Nearly all the branches of the Workmen's Circle responded warmly to the appeal to help their unemployed members. Many branches established special funds for the purpose.

At the last convention of the Workmen's Circle, held in Washington, D.C., during the first week of May, 1931, the sum of $25,000, was appropriated to help pay the dues of unemployed, needy members, and to aid them in special cases.

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