

UNEMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL PROSPERITY

While the Labour Party differs from its capitalist opponents in holding that no industry can be a source of wealth to the nation which does not secure to the workers engaged in it the wages, hours of labour, and conditions of employment that are essential to health, economic independence and the enjoyment of reasonable leisure, it differs from them still more in its attitude to unemployment. According to the doctrine long advanced by Conservative and Liberal politicians, and still echoed, even to-day, in the face of a century of experience, the cause of unemployment is to be found in some defect of individual character or some lack of personal initiative, and provision for it must be restricted, therefore, to the barest necessities of physical existence.

Hence the Conservative Government has abandoned in despair the fulfilment of its pledges to prevent unemployment from occurring, while, when it occurs, it regards every proposal to provide honourable maintenance for those who suffer from it as a step on the road to national bankruptcy. By an inconsistency as irrational as it is cruel, it drives the unemployed on to the Poor Law, and then penalises Poor Law authorities for coping with the problem flung at them by itself. Its interference with Local Authorities through the Board of Guardians (Default) Act, the Local Authorities (Audit) Act, and the Local Authorities (Emergency Provisions) Act, is a characteristic and sinister blow at one of the essential foundations of democratic government.

The Labour Party has always protested against a policy which attempts to palliate the symptoms of a grave social disease, while refusing to cope with its fundamental causes. It has no desire, therefore, for an extension of "doles," whether they are paid from the rich to the poor, or, as is more commonly the case to-day, from the poor to the rich, and it only regrets that its Conservative opponents, who are horrified when such payments are made to the destitute, appear to regard them with equanimity when they are received, in the shape of dividends and rent, by the well-to-do. But, while it would welcome the impartial application to all classes of the rule that he who will not work shall not eat, it repudiates as an outrage the suggestion, still advanced to-day, in spite of its repeated refutation by official inquiries, that unemployed workers are not anxious to obtain employment. It insists that, as long as the nation chooses to maintain an economic system by which unemployment is produced, the weight must not be allowed to fall with crushing severity either upon its helpless victims or upon the overburdened ratepayers.

Provision for the Unemployed

Naturally, therefore, the Labour Party will take every step in its power to ensure that the provision for unemployment is humane and adequate, and will meet the additional cost by State grants, so that it falls neither on the worker's contribution nor on the cost of production. It will introduce such amendments as are necessary in the Unemployment Insurance Acts, in order that the needs of the