

Pittsburgh Social Workers Readily Endorse Courier's Welfare Emergency Appeal

Local Y. M. C. A., Y. W. C. A., Urban League and Pastors Favor Plans for Unemployment Crisis.

Realizing that the boom of industry is on the decline, that wages are being cut and men are rapidly being dropped from factory payrolls, the social workers, ministers and welfare workers of Pittsburgh are showing tremendous interest in marshalling their forces for the purpose of administering relief to the suffering as much as possible this winter when the situation becomes more acute and destitute and want will be prevalent.

The Pittsburgh Courier, seeking to stimulate greater interest in this direction, is making a first-hand investigation to see what forces are already at work on plans to this effect. A representative has held a conference with various leaders of welfare groups and find them unanimous in their willingness to be of whatever assistance they can.

As an indication of what is coming, an unknown worker remarked in a restaurant Tuesday morning: "I went up to the mill last night to get a job and the man said not only was he not taking on more men, but had cut off the whole night shift—55 men—that has been working all summer."

Mr. J. Carter Robinson, head of the Negro department of the State Employment Bureau, said of the decline in work: "Tell colored people that under no circumstances come to Pittsburgh looking for a job before next April 1, no matter what kind of advertisements are seen in the newspapers or otherwise. The situation right now is beginning to get critical.

"Colored people in the South think that after they gather their crops and get a little cash in hand, then is the time to come North. It is not. May is the best month in the year to come North. Then there is a possibility for work all summer, but in the winter everything gets slow and there is little chance for newcomers to find something to do."

With the above facts as a starter the Courier representative called on the Urban League, the Y. M. C. A., the Y. W. C. A., Rev. J. C. Austin, head of the Baptist Ministerial Council; Rev. J. C. Anderson, head of the Methodist Ministerial Council; Mrs. Beulah Ella Mason, head of the Beulah Rescue Home, and Rev. Charles Henry Trusty, pastor of the Grace Presbyterian church.

In the absence of Mr. Samuel R. Morsell, executive secretary; Mr. George A. Perkins, business secretary, after personally indorsing the move to arouse the social consciousness of the Pittsburgh leaders, spoke of the capacity of the Y. M. C. A., and how if more young men would take advantage of the opportunities offered the environment there would

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tend to stimulate the feeling of brotherhood which would be of much value in the case of an emergency as is anticipated later in the season.

Of the young men already in the dormitories 75 per cent. are working men and all are at present employed as Westinghouse workers, mechanics and machinists in garages, and hotel men. Twenty-five per cent are students in the University of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh School of Technology.

Miss Jean Hamilton, head of the Y. W. C. A. at 2215 Wylie avenue, went over the plans and work she already has in motion for welfare work among girls. It is the Y. W. policy to care for working girls in the home and take any case of destitution that comes to them. If such a case is not in their line they recommend it to the proper social agency.

For direct work of reclamation and development they have the swimming club, home nursing club, gymnasium club conducted by the local Red Cross, high school girls' club and grade school girls' club. They have a standing offer to open clubs in dressmaking, millinery, arts and crafts upon the application of ten persons.

Mr. John T. Clark, for five and a

half years head of the Pittsburgh Urban League, has done much work in relief already and is still doing a great deal. He has a list of restaurant owners who are friendly to him and when he sees a man in want he usually takes him to where he can get a meal for what he has or free. In this way he has been able to relieve hundreds in previous unemployment crises and is depending on the same method for the approaching slump this winter.

Mr. Clark explained that hundreds of men are coming into Pittsburgh from the surrounding cities and small towns now in search of inside work for the cold weather. And many of the construction firms are laying them off, too. Some, he said, come in with money, but either gamble it away or get rid of it by some other quick method. Then they stand around helpless waiting for the first kindly person that comes along to give them something.

In this case the first thing he does is get in touch with employers to whom he has supplied men before and see if they can take on one or two who are destitute. Usually he succeeds and they are sent where they have access to bunkhouses and meals in connection with their work.

A week ago Mr. Clark called a conference of social workers at the Y. M. C. A., and they discussed plans for work co-operating when the

demand requires it.

The Rescue Home of Mrs. Beulah Mason, at 211 Erin street, is of 13 years' standing. She has been the Matron herself for eight years. During its existence she estimates about 1200 women and children have been cared for until they were able to do for themselves, or women who left their children with her and worked and supported them.

She operates a day nursery in connection in which she cares for babies of working women.

Her method in the rescue home is to take any case where there is real need. For instance, a man may get out of work and can't find anything. He gets behind in his rent. The landlord puts him out. His wife and children have nowhere to go. Mrs. Mason welcomes them and helps them to exist until they can help themselves again. She said sometimes they work and pay her back, and again they slip off and she gets nothing for her kindness.

Cases come in from the Travelers' Aid, where women and children come from the South to meet their husbands here working, and when they get here the husband is not to be found. The children may be barefooted, they may be out of money. In such instances she and her husband get shoes for the children and cares for them until the woman can find something to do.

Unmarried mothers often come to her. She cares for them in their confinement and assists them to get work and care for the child until the mother either gives it away or takes it to care for herself.

In one case a woman was released from the Western Penitentiary on parole, after serving eight years.

She came to Mrs. Mason, who got her a job and helped her get straight. The woman is now married and doing well in Ohio.

Miss Aluvia M. Stoner, secretary of the colored women's department of the State Womens' Employment agency, with offices at No. 435 Fourth Avenue, spoke of colored women in employment. She said there is more work than applicants, but in many cases the women do not give satisfaction. The principal work is domestic. The factories and janitorial work is on the decline.

Speaking for his congregation at No. 75 Arthur street, Rev. Chas. H. Trusty, who is celebrating the 55th anniversary of his church this week and the 13th anniversary of his pastorate, said he has already thought of formulating plans for relief work in late winter. Two years ago, he said, "My church fed twice a day between three and four hundred men for several weeks. But if we do it again it will be in the light of our past experience. Because there was something free, men of all classes, criminals and those who wouldn't and didn't work when they could, came and even crowded the worthy poor away. There will have to be some way for weeding out these undesirables, or else you will have an aggregation of criminals who will actually menace the well-being of the community.

"And again, the Associated Charities and the Salvation Army have a system for just this kind of work. Why not put the proposition up to them and make them come across with taking their share of the Negro men who need aid?"

"But if they won't do it, or if they shift the responsibility?" he was asked.

"Well," he replied, "yes, we tried that before and they shifted the responsibility on our churches.

"The work is unquestionably one that needs to be done, and it needs thought and money to carry it out. I'm willing to work along the same lines I did before. I wish the Courier success in arousing the other ministers and social workers in this direction."

Rev. J. C. Anderson, pastor of "Big Bethel", in his home at No. 95 Elm street, stood squarely in favor of the movement. "I think it would be better," he said, "if you would come before the Ministerial Council, which meets every Monday and place the proposition before all the ministers at once. I would be glad to see that they give you a hearing. I believe our people should take care of their own when in need. Other races do it and we should do no less. Say I am heartily in favor of the movement."

Rev. J. C. Austin, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, at Wylie avenue and Devilliers street, said his denomination has already appointed a committee to devise ways and means for welfare work on an extensive scale. He further stated, however, that he is willing to co-operate with an especial city movement along lines which he already has in motion. He is glad of the Courier's effort and hopes it will make the work easier by placing it before the people and creating favorable sentiment.