

Women and Children in Distress.

AN APPEAL.

Fellow Citizen,—

On behalf of the women and children suffering misery through insufficient food and clothing, I am appealing to you for assistance.

The conditions are appalling. Daily we are faced with distress that it is impossible to describe. A few days ago a man informed the Committee that his little child had died, and that unless he was given assistance his loved one would be buried in a pauper's grave. He was assisted.

The same evening a woman with her six children were turned out of their house and had nowhere to go for shelter. This woman was within a month of motherhood. To see the helpless children clinging to their mother, who was powerless to protect them, was heart-breaking. The woman and her children were provided with shelter.

In another home a child was born, but died after a few hours. Members of my Committee who investigated this case have no doubt but that the baby was starved to death before it was born.

A mother of seven children, the two last being twins four months old, the next eldest being two and a half years of age, was afraid that the twins would die owing to lack of proper food. The twins had been living on Lactogen. It was found too expensive to feed the twins on this food, and at the same time provide for the other children out of the scanty relief money. A change of diet may have been fatal to the twins. The Bacchus Marsh Milk Food Co. was telephoned, and told the position. A generous gift of a case of Lactogen was given to meet this and other cases where young children were being reared on this food. But we will want more Lactogen.

We have redeemed blankets, sheets, boots and clothing from pawnshops, which had been pawned to raise money to buy food.

The following are copies of two of the many letters we receive appealing for assistance:—

"I am asking you if you have any boots or shoes you could give me, as the children are going to school barefooted. The sizes are 10, 11, and 4. I am giving my husband this note, as I am unable to come in myself, as I am a cripple."

"North Melbourne, 9/7/19.—Dear Madam,—We are urgently in need of blankets for the children, as we have only bags covering some of the children's beds."

In this family there are ten children.

A case of distress was mentioned in the "Age" the other day of a woman with six children being without shelter. The fact was also mentioned that the woman was within a month of motherhood. The following letter has since been received from her:—"I am not feeling too well. Please, Mrs. Cadden, have you been able to get underclothing and sheets for me, as I have not even a binder if I was to take bad. It is terrible to be placed like me. I have only baby's things that you gave me. I have no wood. . . ."

These cases are typical of scores that come before us daily.

This distress has not come as a result of the present industrial struggle, but rather is it due to many months of insufficient work to provide money enough to supply the home properly with food and clothing. The following are cited as a few cases of the earnings of competent wharf laborers who have presented themselves for work from day to day.

Bureau No. 1547.—Has a wife and six children; has had to send the children away to prevent them from starving. He has earned about £12 since Christmas. His number has not been put upon the Board to date. He has had to go to the gate for every job.

No. 1742.—From Christmas until April 28, 1919, he has earned £4. He has a wife and seven children.

No. 1831.—From December 20, 1918, to April 28, 1919, he has earned £7/1/1.

No. 1632.—From January 1, to April 28, 1919, he has earned £2/10/-. Has a wife to support.

No. 1619.—Has had three jobs in four months. Total earned, £5.

No. 1678.—Has had no job for three months to April 28, 1919.

No. 1622.—Worked on the s.s. Junee, carrying potatoes, work which the loyalist refused to do. This year, till April 28, income amounted to £2.

No. 1421.—Has had one job in four months, and had to rush the gate to get it. Earnings for the job, £2/4/7½. Has a wife and two children.

We could quote many other cases, but the above are sufficient to indicate the terrible state of affairs.

Women and children of the Wharf Laborers are not receiving assistance from either the Federal or State Governments, nor from the Trades Hall Relief Fund.

A donation of clothing, blankets, boots for children, foodstuffs, potatoes, meat, flour, vegetables, skinned rabbits, etc., will be gratefully accepted.

Cheques, money orders, postal notes, etc., will be acknowledged.

Trusting assistance will be forthcoming,

Yours fraternally, (Mrs.) ALICE A. WARBURTON, Sec.
Women's and Children's Wharf Laborers' Relief Committee.

Wharf Laborers' Institute, 480 Flinders Street,
Melbourne, 21st July, 1919.