

Office of
Oklahoma Free Employment Bureau

Under Direction of Commissioner of Labor

CHARLES L. DAUGHERTY
COMMISSIONER
OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA.

Muskogee, Oklahoma, 12-14-1914

Miss Ida.M.Tarbell,

Dear Miss Tarbell;—

Through the kindness, and at the suggestion, of Mr. Dawson, will undertake to give you some idea, of the conditions we have in Okla. and the methods we use in handling the question of unemployment. Have been greatly interested in your article in the "American" and also views advanced by other writers on the subject. I understand that Mr. Dawson has sent you copies of some matter I have written, which will to a great extent, give the results of my experience, and which will therefore will not be necessary to repeat.

However, permit me to call your attention to our work for the year 1911-1912 (fiscal year beginning July 1). In that year we placed 7459 persons out of this office, at a cost of 16.5 cents per capita. Our average cost being 29.7 cents per capita. While this year was a tremendous success, in the matter of numbers and cost still I do not consider our work in that year as valuable as the past year, 1913-1914, when we place about one half as many persons, at a cost of about 35 cents per capita. In the years 1911-1912 work was plenty, the question was not where to find jobs, but where to get the help, and it was simply a matter of clerical work to register our applicants out, however in the past two years it has been a matter of personal and individual effort, we have no demand for large bodies of laborers, and our work is more with individuals, and individual positions.

We have rather different conditions in Okla. than in most places operating public labor exchanges. In the first place, most of these exchanges operate in larger cities, where there is a greater congestion of labor during the winter months, in particular, and where there is a greater demand for labor at odd jobs, etc. Also many of them operate where there is a fixed demand for a large number of laborers at certain seasons, as for instance, Milluawaukee, has the north woods to supply, and most other places has some fixed demand of this character. With us however, with one or two exceptions, our large orders come from R.R. construction or maintenance, or Municipal construction, and we have very little of these in the past two years. Also, as we operate in a smaller City, we go outside to a great extent, and handle the towns around for a radius of 150 to 200 miles, like they were parts of the streets of Muskogee. Also, we do not have the crowds of idle people, besieging the free office, for a job to get a few bites to eat, like in some places, and I hope that, through our efforts, we will never have such conditions in Okla.

The exceptions we have to above, is our harvest, which usually requires about 15,000 men for about ten days, and out Cotton crop, which is hard to estimate. In handling the cotton, we have to

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use natives of the Cotton country, and families, and in this particular this work differs from most work using large bodies of laborers. In these two cases, the wheat harvest and the cotton crop, the economical features, to the wheat produces and cotton farmers, and the financial interests depending on these crops, are benefitted more, than the laboring interests, by our service in securing help promptly. While at the same time the travelling labor, is also greatly benefitted.

This then brings me to consider, what is, or should be the true function of the public labor exchange. The first proposition which I advance in this matter, is that the popular conception, that the public labor exchange, is a charitable or philanthropic institution is wrong, and that the exchange, should not be conducted on that basis.

My theory is that the function of a public labor exchange, is, or should be, (1) Conservation;— When human energy is dissipated in idleness, an economic waste occurs, as when for instance, as gas well wastes into the atmosphere, or a tract of forest is denuded by fire, and that if the State or the Government, in the exercise of its functions, caps the wasting gas well, or extinguishes the forest fire, it is also its duty, to by means of the public labor exchange, obviate as far as practicable, the economic loss of labor.

That in addition to the above function, the public labor exchange exercises an economical function (2) on the same basis in regard to our labor, that the bank or clearing house exercises in regard to our currency. The attached clipping will explain, figured in dollars and cents, what I mean in this particular.

A clearing house for labor is an up-to-date idea. The Want Ad column of a live newspaper is an excellent substitute and a far greater opportunity than many regard it, but more men like Tom Wiley, the superintendent of the Muskogee Branch of the Oklahoma Free Employment Bureau can do much to help solve the intricate labor problem. During four years of Wiley's administration he found employment for 17,449 people at a cost of only 27½ cents per capita, while the average charge through private agencies is \$1.35. The "Wiley way" saved somebody in four years about \$18,000.00. If each person who secured work from Wiley in the four years obtained one day more

That the third function of the public labor exchange is educational. That the worst effect of our present condition in the labor market, is that the laboring man becomes affected with "wanderlust" he gets into the habit of drifting from place to place, and that this condition has brought into existence a great body of floating laborers, men who are a potential asset to the state, but who, by reason of above conditions have been converted into liabilities. Also that the existence of this body of floating laborers, and the continual recruiting of the same, from a better class of laborers, is as great a menace to the commonwealth, as would be the growing up of large bodies of our citizens without the privileges of the common school system. ~~The public labor exchange~~

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Muskogee, Oklahoma.

In regard to the above, I consider that I have done a better days work, if I can place one family out on one of our farms, where they will have an opportunity make a home, and become useful citizens of our commonwealth, than I would had I been able to place 50 Mexicans out to work on a track gang. 11

The question of handling and conserving labor, has only been taken up by the State in the past few years, and public exchanges have not been the success they should be for several reasons one is politics, the legislature creates free employment offices, and makes an appropriation, and persons are appointed to conduct these offices, more to make a job for some one, than for the actual good sought to be accomplished. Another reason is lack of organization or team work within the States, and also, lack of system of interchange between States. Any law creating free employment offices, should also make it the duty of all factory inspectors, agricultural agents, and other state employees, visiting employers of labor, to make daily reports of the condition of the labor market, in all plants they inspect, or in regard to crop conditions on the farms they visit. In fact they should act as solicitors for the labor exchange, in the same manner that a commercial traveller might carry a side line. While we have no law to this effect in Okla. Mr. Ashton, the commissioner of labor elect, intends, after the first of the year, to establish a system of daily exchange between our three offices, and to require factory inspectors to make reports in regard to the labor market in all plants, and places they visit, and also, intends to have his assistant to act as a travelling solicitor. We will also endeavor, as far as possible to get information from the agricultural dept in regard to crops.

While we can organize our State force in this manner, still there should be a nation wide organization. I must confess that I do not believe that the plan of using the Post Offices as employment agencies to be practicable, only in the matter possibly of disseminating information. The subject is too large, and requires a systematic, even might say scientific study of the matter from a National point of view, to be successfully handled as a branch of the Postal business.

The system as proposed by the Commission on Industrial relations, of a Federal grant to States operating labor exchanges, based on uniform work, and with a system of clearing houses, which local offices should work in conjunction with, I consider the most practical idea offered.

I would be pleased, if, through the kindness of Mr. Dawson, you might be able to offer me any suggestion, which would improve our work, in Okla. and would be glad to give you the results of my observation and

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experience in any particular line, or of any feature of the work at any time.

Thanking you for the consideration I hope you will give the above,

I remain,

Very truly,

Thos. Wiley. Spt.

Miss Tarbell =

I wish you could see the
man who writes this - self-edu-
cated - handicapped in several ways.
earnest, honest and sincere - He
is doing great work for a full time
\$900⁰⁰ per year and 300⁰⁰ for expenses
of his office - undoubtedly

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CHARLES L. DAUGHERTY
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OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA.

Muskogee, Oklahoma, 11-15-1914

Dear Sir;--

No doubt you have had your attention called to, and probably have been interested in the question of unemployment, which has been discussed at length by the press, various features of the same has been taken up by our leading students of economics, in fact, a great amount of thought has been given to the same.

The question of the great and increasing number of casual or drifting laborers, which degenerate into vagrants, converting what is, potentially, an asset, into a liability on the hands of the Commonwealth, is a question deserving of all of the study which has been given the same.

Herewith enclosed please find a pamphlet which has been issued by the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations, in which certain plans for mitigating above conditions are discussed. Also find a copy of my reply to same, which will show, in brief, what we are doing in connection with the Muskogee office of the Oklahoma Free Employment Bureau, along the line in question.

The ~~new~~ plan for a Federal grant to States operating Free agencies, based on uniform work, is the plan favored by the Commission as a means for the Govt. to assist in handling the matter. There is a strong probability that within the next two years, Congress will pass a measure to this effect. Should this be done it will materially help the States operating such offices, and at the same time render these agencies more efficient.

Oklahoma at present operates three agencies, I have no doubt that your attention will be called to these offices during the next term of legislature, and I therefore wished to call your attention to some features of the same. While it is true, that in Okla. we operate on much lower appropriations than offices operating in older States, still we cannot expect Okla. a new state, and with a much lower tax total than ~~the older states~~ older states, to be as liberal, and in my opinion, taking conditions into consideration, the State has been very liberal in the matter.

On the other hand, as far as the Muskogee office is concerned, I am willing to place it's record for economical operation, and low per capita cost with efficiency, in comparison with any office operating in the country, in other words, there is no office operating which has given greater returns for the money spent therein. This is rather strong assertion, but I have yet to see the records of any other office which might cause me to modify the same.

There is another feature I wish to call to your attention. Most of the offices operating in the older States are located in large Cities, like Chicago, Boston or St. Louis. They make no effort to extend their influence ~~over~~ over more than local territory. On the other hand we are operating in a smaller City, and we handle work in towns of a radius of 100 miles or more like they were part of the streets of Muskogee. In fact most of our work at this time is of this character.

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To do work of this character takes more postage, more telephone tolls and more labor than local work, but it is giving the service of the office to more of our citizens and is well worth the added exoense.

Permit me ### to say that the representitives of the Industrial Relations Conmission, who have been making inquirey into operation of employment agencies, have spoken very highly of this feature of our work, and seem to think that our practice of circularizing prosplets, and in other ways of like character, trying to extend the influence of the office, is original with us, as no other Free office goes to this pains to solicit business.

Now, while ous salaries are lower than the average for such places, for reasons I have outlined above, I would not suggest increasing them. But I would respectfully submit that \$300.00 a year or \$25.00 per month is hardly sufficient to cover Office rent, Telephone tental and tolls, postage and other contingent expenses for an office operating as above. Also, an increase of this appropriation for contingent expenxes, would give the Spt. more means to work with, and enable him to give more service for the money invested.

Hoping that you will give the above your consideration, and ##### in particular, during the next term of legislature.

I remain,

Spt.