



## The Russian War Aims

# Maryland Law Which Makes Everybody Work

Conscription of the Unemployed Rich and Poor Has Begun in One State,  
and Congress Has Before It a Similar Plan for the Nation

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**T**HE report from Washington that a bill compelling all able-bodied citizens of the United States to be regularly employed will be introduced in Congress and the similar proposal just made in New York State call attention to the Maryland compulsory work law, the first piece of legislation of its kind enacted in this country.

Men are actually being fined or jailed in Maryland for failing to work—and being punished regardless of whether they have the means to support themselves or are being supported by others. For whether an idler is or will become a burden on the community is no longer the test in Maryland—the question, and the only question, is whether the person accused has a job at which he is “regularly and continuously” employed.

It is so short a time, as the world goes, since the supply of labor was so much greater than the demand as to cause nation-wide distress that it may be a little hard to realize that the Legislatures of at least two States have made deliberate idleness a crime, irrespective of means or station in life of the idler, and that steps are being taken for similar legislation by other States, as well as by the national lawmaking body.

Maryland has even gone so far as to adopt a species of civil conscription by

which the unemployed are registered and assigned to work, either for the State or for private employers under State supervision. Failure to register is a misdemeanor, and failure to do the work assigned subjects the offender, if he does not become employed elsewhere, to a more severe penalty than for violating the registration provisions.

The law has been in operation since last August, and while the number of persons at work under assignment is nominal, yet the number of those who have been driven into jobs by fear of the penalties provided is large enough to justify the statement that the measure is a success and is fully worth the time, labor, and expense which the State has given in enacting it into law and enforcing its provisions.

Reports received from the State's Attorneys and other public officials of various counties of the State are practically unanimous to the effect that the compulsory work law has decreased idleness in their communities and has done something toward increasing the none too ample supply of labor. A sweep of Baltimore, the largest city in the State, by the Police Department, resulted in the voluntary and involuntary registration of hundreds of idlers, and there was a scramble for available jobs by the leisurely inclined.

In past years farmers have had a great deal of trouble with colored la-

borers, most of whom seem to have acquired the habit of working for a day or two and then taking a vacation until the money earned is exhausted. Of course, this situation greatly hampered the farmers and interfered with the proper care and harvesting of crops. Those in charge of the enforcement of the law paid special attention to the needs of the farmers, and their efforts met with as much success as could reasonably be expected. For instance, a county Magistrate complained that there were about twenty-five idlers in his town, the arrest of whom would have crowded the county jail and imposed a severe financial burden on the taxpayers. He was instructed to order the arrest of several of the offenders and to await further developments. Two were arrested on the charge of failing to register. They were convicted and fined. After paying their fines they hustled from the courtroom and sought jobs. That same day the other idlers were no longer to be found at their accustomed haunts. *They had voluntarily gone to work.*

The Maryland law, the constitutionality of which is shortly to be tested in the courts, was drafted by Attorney General Albert C. Ritchie, after he and his assistants had made a rather lengthy investigation of the subject at the request of the Maryland Preparedness and Sur-

vey Commission, now the Maryland Council of Defense. That body until recently was headed by Carl R. Gray, President of the Western Maryland Railway and member of the Railroad General Operating Committee.

Last June the Governor of Maryland convened a special session of the Legislature to consider a program of legislation, included in which was what is now the Maryland compulsory work law. All the bills in that program were drafted by Attorney General Ritchie and approved by the Maryland Council of Defense as measures needed by the State to meet the emergencies growing out of the declaration of war.

In working out the details of the compulsory work law Mr. Ritchie had the benefit of suggestions made by Dr. Frank J. Goodnow, President of Johns Hopkins University, a recognized authority on constitutional questions and former constitutional adviser to the President of the Chinese Republic.

The law is a war measure pure and simple. It provides that whenever, because of the existence of a state of war, the Governor “determines that it is necessary, for the protection and welfare of the people of the State,” that all able-bodied male persons between 18 and 50 years of age, inclusive, be employed in occupations carried on by the State, the counties or the City of Baltimore,