

In Southgate members of the Local Representative Committee were busily collecting for the National Relief Fund, but the Committee had never met to consider the distress in its own district.

On September 3rd, just a month after the declaration of war, the machinery of the Poplar committee for registering applications for relief was completed. It was mid-September before the names and addresses of distressed applicants had been sent to the secretaries of the ward committees for investigation. Investigated they were, and called up for further investigation by the ward committees, which had no aid to give them.

Everywhere shortage of food and clothing met me. The homes were bare—everything possible pawned or sold, the rent in arrears. A farrier with nine children had lost his work through the Government commandeering the horses, four of his children were too young even to get school dinners. A woman was weeping because she had notice to quit. She had a baby seven days old and five other little ones, only two of them old enough to get dinner at school. Her husband was a dock labourer unemployed.

A mother came to me with worried face. Her husband had lost his employment after working twenty-three years for the same firm. Seeking everywhere for a job, he was accosted by a man in the street who showed him a letter "from the Government," as he believed, asking him to get men to go down to work at putting up huts. The poor fellow accepted the work with alacrity, then discovered he must pay 10s. for his railway fare. His wife's sister pawned a ring to provide it. The husband's letters revealed very poignantly how he had fared:

LIZZIE—DEAR WIFE,

I hope you and the children are all right and well. I know it must be a hard struggle for you to keep the place a-going on your little bit what you earn. I was very sorry I could not send you any money on Saturday, as I could not get much, as they only pay out once a fortnight and I could only send a few shillings. We are not getting much money, so I cannot send you up a lot, but I will do my best for you on Thursday when we draw our money. When it rains we have to lose time. We are working out on the fields and sleeping under tents on boards, and the water comes up to them. We sleep in our clothes.

The food is so dear down here; bread 4d. per loaf, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of cheese for 1d., 2d. for a bit of brawn. It is shocking down here! I will come home as soon as I can get enough money to ride home.

We are about ten miles from anywhere and have to walk three miles for each meal. We get up at 4.30 in the morning and wash ourselves as best we can, and go three miles for a cup of coffee or tea, and back to the job by six o'clock. Then it starts to rain and we have to leave off and stand about under sheds with no sides to them and the wind blowing all round you. . . . It is a hard life.

I am always thinking of you and the children. I do miss my bed.

Can't go anywhere; as soon as we are done three miles for tea and back to our tents. It is pitch-dark unless we buy candles; then the wind blows them out!

I shall be glad when I get home to see you, dear Liz. Remember me to Cassie and kiss the children for me. . . . Tell Mr. C., the landlord, I have not forgot him. I will send him up some soon and pay him up as soon as I can; he is very good to let me owe it.

DEAR LIZZIE,

There are hundreds of men keep coming and going down here. One of the tents is holding 500 men sleeping on canvas and one blanket they sent us to cover up our feet. On Saturday you know it rained all day, and when the men got their sub. they went up to the marquee and came back drunk and wet through to the skin with rain. It is pouring in torrents while I am writing this letter to you. When they go to rest they want to fight each other. One man who was drunk wanted to fight the 500 men, so they pushed him over to sleep, but he would not be quiet, so they threw two pails of piddle on him what the men piddled in their pails. It was an uproar, fighting and hollering all night, no sleep that night, and bread and jam for breakfast to make you strong, and tea with no milk in it!

Good-bye for the present. Please write if you have a letter from T—— F—— of Poplar about work, or anybody else who sends for me.

J. H——

your husband.

Though the moratorium arranged between Lloyd George and the bankers in the first days of war had only applied to debts over £5, Judge Atherley Jones, in a gesture worthy of his Chartist father, adjourned all the judgment summonses for debts under £5 *sine die*, declaring that he would not make committal orders in such times. In other Courts many such orders were made; many evictions took place, and many more were threatened, sometimes because rent was in arrears, sometimes because a workman had gone to the War and his landlord-employer desired the house for another workman. In Glasgow evictions of soldiers' wives rapidly became a scandal. It was estimated that 500 summonses for eviction were being issued each week. In East London many women came to us in terror of being turned out. One of them, a poor trouser finisher, who maintained by her sweated labour two children at school, and a third thrown out of work by the War, had been given by the magistrate only a week's respite before eviction.

In face of the public outcry, a Courts Emergency Powers Act was passed on August 31st compelling landlords to go to the Court for a Magistrate's Order, before evicting tenants, or distraining their goods; and providing, where the magistrates thought fit, for the postponement of proceedings against all debtors whose inability to pay was due to the