

been a definite handicap in the work of the present Conference that notice of it was received a relatively short time before the date of the meeting, especially in the case of oversea members.

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The Report of the Silicosis Conference was examined by the Governing Body at its 85th Session, held in London from 25 to 28 October 1938, and the recommendations made by the Conference were noted.

Long Unemployment in England and Wales

The results of an investigation into the effects of long unemployment¹ on men and women in England and Wales and a survey of the scope and efficacy of the various efforts, both statutory and voluntary (and particularly voluntary), to mitigate its consequences have recently been published in book form under the title "*Men without Work*".²

The enquiry was undertaken in November 1936, the sample method being adopted. Nearly 900 men and women who had been without work for more than a year and who were selected at random from the live register of the Unemployment Assistance Board were interviewed in their homes, and the records of over 100 others were examined. In order that the sample should be as representative as possible, the investigation was carried out in six towns, each with a different unemployment problem; two were prosperous towns, two had a fair amount of employment but also moderately high unemployment figures, and two were places in specially distressed areas. By this means it was possible to obtain not only a picture of the effects of long unemployment on the ordinary man and woman, but also an idea of the types of persons affected and their reactions to it. Without an understanding of who the unemployed are, of the situations with which they are faced, and of the peculiar problems, physical, psychological, and moral, to which unemployment gives rise, the authors of the report do not consider it possible to make a just appreciation of the efficacy of the work being done to alleviate the situation.

FACTS AND FIGURES

The study is divided into five parts, of which the first is entitled "Facts and Figures" and serves as an introduction to the chapters which follow. A brief account of the growth of unemployment is given. Towards the end of 1929, about one man in ten was out of work, and of a total of 1,150,000 unemployed people it is estimated that only about 53,000 (less than 5 per cent.) had been continuously unemployed for a year or more. Three years later, when the depression

¹ By "long unemployment" is meant unemployment continued for more than a year.

² *Men without Work*. A Report made to the Pilgrim Trust. Cambridge University Press, 1938.

was at its worst, 20 out of every 100 unemployed persons had had no work during the preceding 12 months, and in July 1933 this figure had risen to 25, representing a total of over 480,000. When recovery took place, the proportion of long unemployed did not return to its old level but went on increasing; in the autumn of 1935, 26 out of every 100 men at the employment exchanges had been out of work for a full year or more. From about the end of 1936 to about the end of 1937, though the total number of long-unemployed men and women fell to 265,000, the proportion rose, and in August 1937 there were 27 long-unemployed persons in every 100 out of work. The enquiry is based on the assumption that the economic, social, administrative and political problems raised by the existence of what the authors call the "ins-and-outs", or persons out of work only for short periods, and those of the long unemployed are by nature essentially different. The reasons, or at least some of the reasons, why long unemployment fails to go down to the 1929 level cannot be identified with conditions in certain districts or certain industries, or with differences in the extent of industrial recovery. There is a "hard core" of long unemployment in every town of the country no matter how prosperous it is, how diversified its industries, how much its main industry benefits from industrial trends, or where it is situated.

Long unemployment is, however, not distributed evenly over the country, and while it is not confined to the distressed areas they have almost always a far greater proportion of it; where, for instance, in a depressed community there are 70 long-unemployed men, in a prosperous community of the same size there is one. Long unemployment is also unequally distributed over the various industries. A table giving the nineteen industries which in June 1936 contributed most heavily to long unemployment shows that in coal-mining, which heads the list, of every 1,000 coal-miners 123 had been unemployed for a year or more; of every 1,000 shipbuilders and repairers 95 had been unemployed for a year or more; for cotton workers the figure was 67, for seamen 59, for pig-iron and iron and steel workers 57, for pottery and earthenware workers 54; for workers in motor vehicles, cycles, etc., who are at the end of the list, the figure was only 10. The table shows the close connection between long unemployment and industrial decline, and the report states that at least 40 per cent. of the long unemployment throughout the country is concentrated in the four basic and, in the post-war period, declining industries—coal-mining, ship-building, iron and steel, and textile manufacture. Moreover, just as there are prosperous and depressed industries, so there are prosperous and depressed ages. Of the 250,000 long-unemployed men in England and Wales in November 1936, 22,800 were between 18 and 24; 49,900 between 25 and 34; 50,400 between 35 and 44; 55,100 between 45 and 54; and 71,800 between 55 and 64. Once a man is unemployed, the risk of his remaining out of work increases with age; during the year November 1935 to November 1936 the chances of a man of 62 getting back into employment once he had become unemployed were only one-fifth of those of a youth of 19, one-third of those of a man of 30, and half of those of a man of 50.

The report draws a distinction between two types of long-unem-

ployed persons: those out of work for personal reasons, whom it terms "residual", since they remain unemployed even when there are places waiting to be filled, and those whose unemployment is due in the first place to industrial and not personal causes, whom it terms "industrial". Among the residual unemployed the highest proportion is made up of the older men, the numbers increasing steadily from the youngest to the oldest age group, and among the industrially long unemployed the highest proportion is among the young men aged 25-34, the numbers decreasing steadily, though slowly, from this group to the group aged 55-64. Emphasis is laid on the importance of the personal element in unemployment; over 30 per cent. of the present long unemployment should, the report states, be treated largely as a personal problem.

The social importance of long unemployment is then discussed. Long unemployment concerns not only the man himself but also the persons living in the same household with him, and any examination of the problem must take into account the women and children at home and the economic problems of life and dependence in unemployed families. In November 1936, the date of the sample and a time of comparative prosperity, there were in England and Wales 270,000 children under 14 years of age growing up in homes where unemployment had become a permanent state.

THE SAMPLE STUDY

The second part of the report is divided into two sections, the first giving a detailed account of residual unemployment in the six towns selected for the sample, and the second dealing with the physical, psychological and moral problems confronting the long unemployed. The results of the enquiry in the two towns in the prosperous areas are given first. Residual unemployment in these areas may be broken up into various groups: there are old men either in some way incapacitated by age or, though over 55, perfectly fit; there are the unemployables, who represent only a small part of the total; there are those whose social background makes it easy for them to accept idleness and low standards of living; and there is a small group of disabled persons with pensions. There are also those unemployed for technological or other reasons who fail to get work largely because they are confused with this residue. The majority of the men so displaced are still potentially excellent workers and are among the residual unemployed only because no means has been found of making use of their services.

In the four other districts investigated the picture was completely different. Though there is residual unemployment in each of them, it is almost entirely obscured by the vast overlay of industrial unemployment due to such reasons as changes in the structure of industry, the closing of oversea markets, and technical improvements. Industrial unemployment of this kind means that there will be large numbers of men out of work who are young, and thoroughly employable, and in a prosperous place would be working. Other features brought out by the enquiry and pertaining to some of these four other districts were the high proportion, especially in the upper age groups, of physical

disability due in most instances to industrial disease, the loss of qualifications which has resulted from rapidly changing technical processes, the gradual breaking down of the will to work and of the feeling of the value of independence, and the extreme poverty and appalling housing conditions of many of the long unemployed.

An important section is devoted to the physical, psychological and moral problems confronting the long unemployed. As regards the physical problems, the general conclusion reached was that the economic level at which many families were living was such as to cause nervous anxiety and in some instances physical deterioration. There can be no reasonable doubt, the report says, that prolonged unemployment tends inevitably to lower the material standards of the families suffering from it, and if this goes too far the group of those unemployable, not only for physical but also for mental and moral reasons—the real “hard core” of unemployment—will be enlarged. Psychologically, the most serious problems are presented by two groups—those who are employable but whose adjustment to unemployment is so complete that it would be hard to rouse them to work, and those above the age when there is any likelihood of their getting work but who refuse to accept their situation. It is estimated, on the basis of the sample, that the first group consists of some 60,000 men and the second of some 8,000. No revival in trade is likely to make a substantial impression on either of these figures unless special measures are taken to accompany it.

PARTICULAR ISSUES

The third part deals with three particular issues—the wage problem, the older men, and the younger men. In the case of unskilled or semi-skilled workers with large families the approximation of wages to allowances is a decided factor in their attitude to work, and a considerable number of men are kept out of work by the fact that unemployment assistance is a reasonable alternative to low-paid employment. In the previous section discussing the psychological problems confronting the long unemployed, and their incentive to work, it was shown that the Unemployment Assistance Board's scales of assistance are based on need, while wages are not. As a result an unskilled man with a large family, who might when in employment earn a weekly wage of 40s., 35s., or even only 25s., may when unemployed draw from the Unemployment Assistance Board as much as 45s., 50s., or even 57s. (as in one of the cases visited where there were 8 children), to provide for the needs of the family. To reduce the scales of allowances is an impracticable and, the writers consider, a dangerous solution, as the great majority of the families concerned are living well below the “poverty line”. This conclusion that the level of wages and earnings over a considerable section of industry is so low that there is little financial inducement for a man with a fair-sized family to work if he is eligible for unemployment assistance¹, together with the

¹ In this connection it is interesting to compare the report of the Unemployment Assistance Board for the year 1937 (Cmd. 5752), which was analysed in *Industrial and Labour Information*, Vol. LXVII, No. 4, 25 July 1938. A comparison of weekly wage rates and allowances, based on a 5 per cent. sample of the assessments during the week ended 3 December 1937, shows that in the case of 98.7 per cent. of the

conclusion reached in an earlier part of the report that the economic situation of this same section of the unemployed deteriorates progressively with the increasing size of the family, points, the report states, to the necessity for some system of family allowances to supplement the income of those who are working.

With regard to the older men, employers should be encouraged by every means possible to take them back into normal employment, but while frequently the older man's employability is unimpaired in most cases his capacity for adjustment is limited. A plan is suggested under which the older men would be employed for a certain length of time each year on clearance and other amenity schemes.

A significant fact among the younger unemployed men is the number who have settled down in relative contentment without work, and in their case the psychological condition is a more important consideration even than it is with middle-aged and elderly men. The report states that there is a great opportunity here for constructive action on the part of voluntary societies.

UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG WOMEN

The fourth part discusses unemployment among women. Only one of the six places visited, Blackburn, yielded adequate material for a study of women's unemployment through the original sample, and an additional sample was therefore taken from the records of long-unemployed women in Liverpool. In the four other places the question was not of sufficient importance to require a further sample.

In Blackburn in November 1936, the date of the sample, 28 per cent. of all insured women workers were unemployed, and of these 39 per cent. had been out of work for more than a year. These long-unemployed women, of whom nearly half were married and 47 per cent. were over 45 years of age, fall roughly into three categories: those for whom the market is restricted in the particular industry or profession for which they are trained or who are handicapped by age; those who have a family of small children or a sick dependant who cannot be left; and those who suffer from personal disabilities, such as sickness, bad eyesight, and lack of adaptability. In Liverpool long unemployment among women is proportionately a much smaller problem than in Blackburn, and it is mostly the older women who are affected. Here the main problem concerns those in occasional employment, such as cleaners and seasonal domestic workers, though there is also a substantial number of factory workers and a certain number of shop assistants and waitresses. Seventy-four per cent. of the women drawing unemployment assistance are single women and almost two-thirds of these are under 35 years of age. A larger proportion of unemployment among women in Liverpool than elsewhere is due to low employability, a factor which in Blackburn is very small.

Generally, the problem of unemployment among women is com-

male applicants to the Board assessments were below wage rates, in the case of 0.4 per cent. assessments were equal to wage rates, and in the case of 0.9 per cent. assessments were above wage rates. The proportions for women were 96.5 per cent. with assessments below wage rates, 1.3 per cent. with assessments equal to wage rates, and 2.2 per cent. with assessments above wage rates.

plicated by the fact that, in addition to having to compete with men for work in the economic sphere, the working woman often has to fulfil the three functions of mother, wife, and breadwinner, and that during the best years of her life.

Tribute is paid to the value of the Women's Club Movement. This movement has three principal aims: to provide social amenities for women of the working class, to help them to improve their standards of living, and to further adult education in a form adapted to their needs. A condition of membership of the clubs is the payment of a regular subscription, and all forms of help which undermine self respect are rigorously excluded. Given further help to obtain better equipment and better premises, the movement is considered to be potentially of great importance to the country.

THE SOCIAL SERVICE MOVEMENT

The fifth part, a long section, is devoted to an examination of the social service movement, and the first of its subdivisions deals with the general problems of the clubs for unemployed men¹. In the areas of industrial unemployment, where the unemployed are a cross-section of the working-class community, these clubs may be representative of the working class as a whole, but where unemployment is residual the men attending the clubs will be the "down-and-outs", the psychological misfits and the older men. In considering the general problem of the clubs, certain principles must be taken into consideration, the central one being the preservation of the unemployed man's sense of independence. A powerful safeguard that the clubs can provide against what is termed pauperisation, or the state at which a man gradually begins to value his independence less and less, is the giving of a sense of achievement to the men who use them. This may be done, for instance, through craft work or dramatic or re-educational activities, through the effective management of the clubs by the men themselves, or by their constructing the club buildings.

Another factor to be taken into consideration is the isolation of the unemployed man, and this is a problem which is much more marked in the prosperous areas. The sample brought out the significant fact that in one place at least this isolation was in reality due to the subtle distinctions which existed between one social stratum of the working class and another. For this reason, before effective community work of any kind can be done, the local situation must be studied carefully. The feeling of isolation did not affect those who had retained active membership of some social institution to which they had previously belonged. The best remedy is therefore not the formation of special *ad hoc* social institutions, but the support of those already in existence, and the strengthening of the ties which their members had with them during employment. The sample showed that actual harm can be done by the provision of the wrong kind of club—for

¹ Clubs for the unemployed are social centres organised by voluntary effort where facilities are provided for education, occupational work, recreation, and social life generally. Cf. "The Action of Voluntary Organisations to Provide Occupation for Unemployed Workers in Great Britain", by A. C. RICHMOND, in *International Labour Review*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 5, May 1938, pp. 644-651.

instance, separate clubs specifically for the unemployed—and that there is much less likelihood of ill effects if the club has a more general character and is not confined to unemployed men alone.

Thirdly, there is the question of the use to which the unemployed put their leisure. The decline in cultural standards is the primary cause of the difficulties experienced in making the clubs into something more than shelters where men can sit, smoke, and play cards. Further, unemployment, unless it is known to be only temporary, is often found to be too unsettling for the leisure it gives to be used constructively.

A second subdivision studies the clubs actually in existence in the six selected towns, maintaining the same general distinction adopted in the earlier part of the report, and treating first those in areas of industrial unemployment and then those in areas of residual unemployment. The sample brings out the fact that in many cases the members fall into two groups, those who use the clubs for some activity, and those who use them for social purposes only.

The growth of the colleges for adult education in connection with voluntary work among the unemployed has been a marked success. The report discusses four of these residential centres which were visited in the course of the enquiry and where both short courses lasting from three to six weeks, designed primarily to train club leaders, and long courses lasting from six months to a year are given. A certain proportion of the membership of the colleges is recruited directly or indirectly through the clubs. These colleges are gradually becoming an integral part of the educational system, offering the opportunity of further education to many who, in spite of ability and enterprise, have for one reason or another had no secondary education.

In a final section on the clubs and their future, the report refers to the necessity of adjustment and modification to meet changing needs. Many of the clubs may become community centres serving employed and unemployed alike. It may reasonably be hoped that the voluntary movement may produce, in areas where there has been heavy industrial unemployment, a system of institutions which will make it possible for the worker's leisure to be spent in such a way as to make him set a far higher value on it than he has ever set before, and bring into activity interests and powers that have hitherto been dormant. For residual unemployment in prosperous districts, the problem is entirely different. One reason why men are unemployed in prosperous places is that they have dropped out of the community and cannot make the effort to struggle back, and these men certainly will not attend a community centre. Nor will a social club for the unemployed bring them back. What is needed, at least for the younger and middle-aged men, is something of a more active character, that will prove to them that they can work and can be useful members of society.

The survey of the work done by the voluntary agencies for the unemployed ends with a question: "Can it become the foundation for a new system in which men will find opportunities to develop new interests, and through them new principles?" Unemployment has shown the need for such a system. If the worker has formed interests deep enough and friendships close enough when he is employed, they will stand the strain of unemployment.