

Questions.

Professor Tocker : On page 112 it is stated, "Assisted immigration, however, as carried on during the past few years has been one of the causes of bringing about the present unemployment." I would like to know what is the basis for that statement; and I ask the question because it directly negatives the statement I made yesterday, when a somewhat similar question was asked, and I quoted the rate of immigration per thousand of the population between 1900 and 1910—or it may be between 1903 and 1913, I forget which—as 8·9 per thousand, and the rate to 1926, at the present restricted immigration policy, as 8·1 per thousand. It appears to me that before the war we had a greater relative rate of immigration, and since the nominated system has been much more effective in recent years we have had since then an also relatively much more effective system.

Mr. Bishop : I wish to congratulate Mr. Bloodworth on his exceedingly valuable and carefully considered paper. I ask him not to take it as discourteous if we do not ask him any question at this juncture. The ideas he has advanced are exceedingly novel and original; but we feel that we are not in a position to deal with such a paper as this without a little consideration. No doubt when the questions come to be considered in the committee stage Mr. Bloodworth will be inundated with them, but at the moment we do not think there is anything we can ask without a little further consideration.

Mr. Bloodworth's Reply.

Mr. Bloodworth : Replying to Professor Tocker's question as to the causes of unemployment, I think that if there is any other basis the statements from the different professors confirm the contention that immigration is the cause of the want of employment. Although the volume of immigration may be more now than it was in the years preceding the war, I have no doubt its effects on industry are different from what they were before the war. On account of the improved methods of carrying on works the employers do not need now to employ the same number of men to get through a given job as they did before the war. The fact is that, although the volume of immigration may be exactly the same, or it may be slightly less than before the war, there is no continuance of employment for the men because of the changes in methods of working; and this, in my opinion, makes immigration a contributory factor to the present unemployment. I know from my own personal experience, and from that of many other unions, that men who have recently come to this country are amongst those who are at present unemployed, by reason of the fact that they are not accustomed to the conditions prevailing here. When there is more labour offering than there is work for, a man who is not accustomed to the local conditions is not as readily taken on as the man who is used to them. I accept Mr. Bishop's explanation of the reasons for there being no questions, but I must say that personally I regret it.

Employment Assurance.

The Chairman : The next business before the Conference is the reading by Mr. Finn of a paper on "Employment Assurance."

Mr. Finn : Mr. Chairman, my paper is not a lengthy one; and therefore I will not be called upon, I think, to make any apology for it. I have attended this Conference with a sincere desire to do what I am able to further its objects; and, accepting the statement by yourself that the sky was the limit to the subjects to be discussed here, I am making a break from the subjects which have so far occupied this Conference. This question of employment assurance may, and I hope it will, have an important bearing on the deliberations of the Conference. When dealing with an entirely new proposal it is just as well to omit details wherever possible, and I have attempted to do so. I am here as a representative of the Manufacturers' Association, but I wish it to be clearly understood that the proposals are my own, and that they have not been considered by any representative body. I trust that my questioners, at the conclusion of my paper, will extend to me the same courtesy as has been extended to others, and write out their questions. I shall have very much pleasure in answering them as far as I am able to do so. My paper is as follows :—

EMPLOYMENT ASSURANCE.

We have in New Zealand two problems which are a serious hindrance to the development and progress of the country. One is the fear of unemployment with the worker, and the other is fear of low prices with the farmer. The object of this paper is to show that both of these difficulties can be overcome and result in greater prosperity to the Dominion.

With regard to employment, the readiness with which people respond to an appeal for funds to provide work for the unemployed suggests that responsibility exists, and that better provision should be made to ensure better employment for all requiring it. It is possible for this to be done at very little cost by adopting better methods of production. We have two main sources of wealth, land and labour, and our object should be to keep these in constant employment. If we do that we can provide work for a much larger population than we have at present. No miracle is required. It is not a question of wages, but methods. Farming to-day is a specialized business, competing in the world's markets, and on its success depends the prosperity of the Dominion. We all share in the proceeds of the produce, but one of the complaints of the farmer is that we do not all contribute to its production. Economic waste would be removed and the position of the workers, the farmers, and the Dominion generally would be greatly improved by the establishment of (a) Employment Assurance Fund; (b) farm service depots; (c) Employment and Primary Production Board.

Employment Fund.—What I propose is that all persons over sixteen years of age should contribute 1s. per month to this fund. It need not be compulsory, but those not contributing should lose the