

(V) Results of the Individual Investigation of a large Sample of those on the Unemployed Registers for over Twelve Months.

In the consideration of the analysis of the unemployed we noted that considerable numbers had been on the registers for over twelve months, and seemed to have reached a stage of more or less chronic unemployment.

It may be again explained that applicants desiring to be considered for employment are required to renew their applications fortnightly, and those not doing so are struck off the register. Applicants off the register for over three months are treated as new registrations on next application. Persons (whether or not they were temporarily or intermittently employed) renewing their applications at shorter intervals than three months are regarded as continuously on the register.

We considered that it would be informative and instructive if these cases could be individually investigated, so as to ascertain as far as possible the causes which accounted for their being in their present position. We therefore appointed one of our number to visit the four chief centres, and a searching investigation was made into over 50 per cent. of these cases, each one being interviewed and reports obtained in regard to them from previous employers and citizens to whom they were known. The staff of the Employment Bureau at each centre gave every assistance, and facilities were provided for interviewing the applicants privately. By a short conversation tactfully interspersed with a series of questions statements were obtained as to the causes and reasons for their continued unemployment. The material collected embodies a fairly correct picture of the position in regard to these men. More than half of this class on the register at each centre at the time of the visit were interviewed, each one being taken at random as they came in to renew registration, and the number dealt with may fairly be regarded as representative of the whole. Although many of the men have worked so large a proportion of the period that they might almost be regarded as semicausal workers, there is still grounds for serious misgivings with respect to the amount of unemployment revealed. The quality of the men as potential workers is surprisingly high, all things considered. The very few men marked as "Unemployable" is probably due to the fact that the most hopeless and feckless do not register; there is nothing to gain by it, save investigation, which they do not want. Hence the lowest stratum is probably not in the investigation. On the other hand, the more virile and individualistic when thrown out of work do not trouble to register, but battle round and fend for themselves.

Seasonal unemployment seemed most marked in Christchurch, and unemployment due to retrenchment on municipal works in Auckland. Unemployment due to displacement by new processes appears common to all centres. There are comparatively few recent immigrants in the number.

In addition to the personal interview with the applicant, inquiries were made in each case, and reports received from recent employers of the applicant or from citizens to whom he was known, and by this means a rough classification of the applicants interviewed was made under various headings. In all, 453 men were dealt with—190 in Auckland, 81 in Wellington, 160 in Christchurch, and 22 in Dunedin. A statistical analysis of the results obtained is given in Tables 9 to 17 of the Appendix. The more important features disclosed by this analysis may now be referred to.

Efficiency.—Considerable care was exercised by the investigator in forming a correct opinion as to the efficiency, as workers, of the men interviewed, and, to that end, inquiries were made from previous employers, wherever possible, as to the working-ability of applicants. Each applicant was then classified under one of six headings, the number of men in each class being as follows: "Superior," 4; "Good," 205; "Fair," 141; "Indifferent," 67; "Poor," 29; and "Unemployable," 7.

Duration of Unemployment.—Some interesting facts are revealed by the classification according to the duration of unemployment during the past twelve months, taken in conjunction with the "efficiency" classification. Although only three men, two of whom were classified as "unemployable," did no work at all during the past twelve months, the great majority of the men suffered considerable spells of unemployment, 252 having had thirty weeks' unemployment or more during the year under review, while 198 men were unemployed for less than thirty weeks. In three cases the duration of unemployment was not stated. One would expect the more efficient men to be employed on the average for longer periods than the less efficient; but, while this is the case, the differences are not as marked as one would expect.

Age Distribution.—The classification according to age-groups was: Under 25 years of age, 62; 25-44 years, 192; 45-64 years, 187; 65 years of age and over, 12. It is noteworthy that a large proportion of the men were included in the older-age groups, 199, or 44 per cent., being over 44 years of age.

Birthplaces.—The majority of the men were New-Zealand-born, 243 being so classified, while 210 were born outside New Zealand. Of these born outside New Zealand, 125 were born in England, 27 in Australia, 27 in Scotland, 15 in Ireland, 8 in other parts of the Empire, while only 8 were born in foreign countries. It is noteworthy that 129 of the 210 immigrants had been resident in this country for ten years or over.

Cause of Unemployment as stated by Applicant.—The reason given by applicants for their unemployment was in 393 cases "lack of employment" in his usual occupation; while 16 were unable to be placed on account of being unfitted for heavy work. Four recent arrivals in New Zealand found themselves unable to get placed in this country; while 8 men left their last employment because they thought the wages too low.

Occupations.—Some 299 men were classified as unskilled labourers, the remaining 154 being widely distributed among no less than 39 separate occupations. Motor-drivers (21), farm hands (14), and carpenters (12) were the only other occupations of any numerical significance.

Conjugal Condition and Dependency.—The conjugal condition of the 453 men was: Single, 131; married, 309; widowed, 13. The dependency classification was: No dependants, 107; one dependant, 76; two dependants, 92; three dependants, 71; four dependants, 54; and five dependants or over, 53.