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*Unemployment.* [Part I. of the Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor.] By HORACE G. WADLIN, Chief of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor. Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., State Printers, 1894. 8vo. pp. ix+264.

THE Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor has, from time to time, presented a great deal of valuable information upon what—if one may venture to follow Mr. Wadlin in his heroic attempt to introduce a needed but rather uncouth term—may be designated as the problem of “unemployment.” Besides the *Annual Statistics of Manufactures*, showing the number employed month by month in the important manufacturing industries of the commonwealth, the

Carlos C. Closson, *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Sep., 1895)

bureau has made several special investigations in regard to the number of the unemployed. As far back as 1878, when it was currently reported that there were from 200,000 to 300,000 persons out of employment in the state, the bureau, with the assistance of the police of the cities and the assessors of the towns, set on foot an inquiry which indicated that even at the worst period of the year not more than 30,000 male and female wage earners were unemployed. (Report of the Bureau for 1879, pp. 3-13). In 1885, in connection with the state census, the bureau conducted an elaborate investigation in regard to the prevalence and duration of "unemployment" among the wage earners of the commonwealth. (Report of the Bureau for 1887). This last named inquiry has furnished by far the most trustworthy basis for computing the extent of unemployment under conditions fairly typical for the industrial population throughout the country in a period of moderate depression. Its most serious defect—the failure to secure the information in a form which would have shown the number unemployed at any specified time during the year—is, it is understood, to be remedied in the similar census which is now in process of compilation, and which may be expected to throw much new light on the extent of "unemployment."

The present report, while it contains much statistical material, comprises also considerable critical discussion of the problem of the unemployed, and it naturally represents, to a certain extent, the personal opinions of the Chief of the Bureau. The reader has, therefore, the double advantage of drawing at once upon the resources of an efficient statistical agency and the judgment of a thoughtful student of social phenomena.

The more general and introductory portion of the report gives, first, a summary account of leading historical examples of public aid to the unemployed, such as the experiment with national workshops in France—under the Provisional Government—after the revolution of 1848, and by contrast the experiment (scarcely less noticeably successful than the former was calamitous) of providing public work for the English operatives thrown out of employment by the "cotton famine" of the sixties. It is to be regretted that the bureau has not added to these accounts (the substance of which was already available in the Report of the Labor Department of the English Board of Trade on *Agencies and Methods for Dealing with the Unemployed*) some record of certain no less interesting and pertinent, but almost forgotten,

experiments of public relief work in this country, and notably the employment afforded by New York in the improvement of Central Park after the crisis of 1857. There is also needed some account of the recent public relief works of the Australian colonies, which have in a single city and a single year represented an expenditure of over one million dollars, and which suggest lessons bearing closely upon our own problems.

The introduction deals, secondly, with contemporaneous measures for assisting the unemployed. Here also, as regards foreign conditions, much of the treatment follows very closely the valuable English report just cited, though information is drawn also from a report of the Office du Travail on *Le Placement des Employés*, the Report of the Bureau of Industries of New Zealand, and other documents. In this connection also there are regrettable omissions. We find, for example, no mention of the publicly subsidized society in Berne, Switzerland, which ensures workingmen against periods of idleness. (Cf. for the discussion of the general adoption of a similar plan as a remedy of the worst evils of "unemployment" Dr. George Adler's pamphlet, *Ueber die Aufgaben des Staats angesichts der Arbeitslosigkeit*. Tübingen, 1894.)

After a discussion of employment agencies, the report summarizes the statistics which the bureau has furnished in previous publications concerning the extent of "unemployment" in Massachusetts. Certain of these figures throw considerable light upon the much disputed question of the number of *bona fide* workmen unemployed during the recent crisis. Thus, during the last four months of 1893 the number employed in the manufacturing industries was, on the average, over 17 per cent. less than the maximum number employed during the year, whereas the corresponding decrease for 1892 was less than 1 per cent.

The most valuable portion of the report is the minute presentation of the statistics of relief work in Boston on the basis of information gathered by the relief committee in investigating candidates for assistance, and subsequently analyzed by the Bureau of Statistics of Labor. The amount expended in wages for men by the Citizens' Relief Committee was \$63,953, which was distributed among 5761 men. The total number of applicants was 7460, of whom the surprisingly large number of 6431 were non-citizens (persons not entitled to vote). Of the total number aided, about 33 per cent. were from 20 to 29 years of

age, about 33 per cent. between 30 and 39, 19 per cent. between 40 and 49 and 8 per cent. between 50 and 59. As regards occupations most numerous represented 4115 were classified as laborers, 768 as tailors, 294 as teamsters, 208 as carpenters, and 169 as painters. Of the 5761 aided, 4026 had been wholly without employment for an average period of 3.02 months, the remainder had succeeded in obtaining more or less work upon "odd jobs." The report gives similarly detailed statistics with regard to the women supplied with work in the sewing rooms opened by the Citizens' Relief Committee, or under their patronage. The statistics here cited apply only to the principal of several of these undertakings, the Bedford street sewing rooms. Here work was furnished to 2728 women out of a total of 3525 applicants, at an outlay for wages of \$24,048. It is suggestive that of the applicants whose nationality was recorded 2028 were found to be foreign born, as against 900 native born. Out of 2382 women whose previous occupations were known, 1025 had been employed at labor which may be classed as "shop work," 570 at "home work," and 787 in personal and domestic service. The previous weekly wages earned by the three groups had averaged respectively \$4.71, \$3.67, and \$3.76. Of the 3525 applicants, 2642, or about 75 per cent., had, so far as could be ascertained by a careful investigation, received no aid from other charitable associations or institutions. These citations will serve to indicate the value of these detailed statistics of the local work in Boston.

One further portion of the report is worthy of note in connection with the question, so much discussed in the newspapers during the depression, as to the scarcity of rural labor as compared with the overplus of urban labor. The bureau obtained testimony from 1021 employers of agricultural labor representing all the agricultural districts in the state. In answer to the question: "Is the demand for agricultural labor in your town apt to be in excess of the actual supply?" 527 answer unqualifiedly in the affirmative, 45 reply in the affirmative so far as regards certain seasons, and 11 so far as concerns women help only. "The number of each sex which the employers found it difficult to obtain is stated to be with respect to the males, 1239, and with respect to the females, 489." These figures confirm the opinion that even in times of depression there is in an agricultural community—not indeed the unlimited demand for labor pictured by some of the newspapers as sufficient to satisfy all of the unemployed

who really desire work—but still a considerable opening for hardy laborers who are willing to accept the rather low wages and the monotonous conditions of farm labor.

C. C. C.

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