

Harbour Boards—will be placed upon a more satisfactory footing to all concerned; no doubt, too, some of the shipping companies, in conjunction with representatives of the waterside workers, will move in a similar direction as regards the stevedores and others employed by them. The London and Liverpool Dock schemes recently begun for the purpose of establishing more regularity of waterside employment there, and also the institution of the labour exchanges in Great Britain generally, are being watched in order that advantage may be taken of the experience thus gained.

The subject of casual employment, not only on the wharves but in all occupations of an intermittent nature, is one that may rightly engage the attention of such a Department as this, and it is hoped that the Department may be enabled before long to render some assistance in the matter. Every occupation which is of an intermittent character obviously causes great loss to the worker, employer, and the general public, inasmuch as the worker receives, on the average, small earnings throughout the year, although at a comparatively high rate per hour or day; while if continuity of employment (not necessarily of one kind) were established, the result would be greater earnings for the worker at a more nearly normal rate, and consequently lower cost to the employer and general public. It will be well therefore to consider whether by means of the Department's bureaux something cannot be done to enable those workers whose employment is intermittent to secure other employment during their present periods of idleness.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE.

In this connection it may not be out of place to state that the advisability of introducing a system of unemployment insurance has been considered to some extent by the Department, and the opinion formed is that such a scheme would not be practicable in a young country like New Zealand. The following are briefly the reasons for the conclusion arrived at:—

New Zealand is not yet a sufficiently settled country to make the introduction of unemployment insurance practicable. In a country like Germany or England the population is large and fairly stable; it is not likely to be increased to any extent by immigration; trade has already been firmly established and the fluctuations of industry that take place are mainly the inevitable fluctuations that are likely to happen periodically. Then there is the fact that in these old countries work is highly specialized, and there is generally therefore a definite line drawn between the different trades. Under the above circumstances it is no doubt possible to make actuarial calculations as to the extent to which unemployment is likely to exist in the immediately future years. In New Zealand, on the other hand, exactly the opposite is the case. There is as yet a small and scattered population liable to large influxes of workers in different trades; there is a lot of new country to open up; new industries to establish; further developments of industries already established to take place as they increase in volume, and so on. Again, work in New Zealand is not highly specialized; a good deal of overlapping takes place amongst the workers, so that an unemployed worker in one trade can, if he is energetic enough, generally "hustle round" and get something else to do. Under such circumstances how would it be possible to make any reliable calculation as to the extent of unemployment likely to take place? Take, for example, the building trade in New Zealand: ascertain the approximate number of workers engaged, make calculations as to what has been the average duration of their employment, and insure them accordingly; in the first year of insurance the building trade might suddenly become slack from various causes. It must be remembered, too, that any unemployment-insurance scheme would attract the bad risks—the good men would have to help to pay for the less competent workers—and it would tend to encourage idleness and fraud.

Even in those countries of Europe where unemployment insurance is established stress is laid upon the great difficulty of eliminating those causes of unemployment which are not due to *bona fide* trade fluctuations, which for the reasons above mentioned would make the introduction of insurance in New Zealand most difficult. Then, the "unemployed" difficulty relates mostly to casual labour, while the systems adopted in Europe benefit chiefly the organized workers in skilled trades.

It is considered that, instead of attempting to provide for insurance against unemployment, the attention and money which it might be proposed to allocate to such a scheme would be better devoted to an endeavour to minimize unemployment; and in this conclusion support is to be found in some of the reports upon the unemployment-insurance schemes in Europe. For example, at Strasburg it is stated that the main object of the insurance scheme was more to provide means for preventing unemployment than to pay workers during idleness. In one of the German statistical reports upon the subject it is stated that the struggle against unemployment must be waged not by insurance but by preventive measures; and steps in this direction