

## 4. UNEMPLOYMENT—THE STATISTICAL BACKGROUND.

By STANLEY LYON.

Statistics relating to unemployment in this country are available from two main sources. There is first, the weekly figures published in the Press showing the number of unemployed who are seeking work and who register at the various employment exchanges throughout the country and, secondly, the figures which are obtained at the decennial Censuses of Population showing the industrial status of the whole population as to whether out of work or at work.

**The Unemployed in Relation to the Occupied Population.**

In 1936 the number of persons returned as having occupations (whether at work or out of work for whatever cause) at Census date was about 1,300,000, and the number returned as out of work was 95,000, or 7 per cent. of the whole occupied population, employed or unemployed. This figure is quite reconcilable with the Live Register figure of the same date and suffers from the same defect that it includes members of farming families and others who are not "unemployed" in the ordinary sense of the term but who must register for unemployment assistance and thereby become technically "unemployed".

The following comparisons with England and Wales shows the problem of the young unoccupied persons in this country:—

*Unoccupied persons as percentage of total persons in each age group.*

Ages	MALES		FEMALES	
	Éire (1936)	E. and W. (1931)	Éire (1936)	E. and W. (1931)
14 and 15 ..	66	36	79	49
16 and 17 ..	30	11	52	24
18 and 19 ..	12	5	35	17

In all but the youngest ages the Irish percentages are twice as high as those for England and Wales. The situation in this country is aggravated by the burden which the maintenance of these young people imposes on the large families to which in most cases they belong. In what follows it must be remembered that when the "unemployed", "out of work" or "persons on the Live Register" are being referred to, these young unoccupied persons are, to a great extent, not taken into account.

**Unemployment in Relation to the Employed Class.**

The following figures taken from the Census of Population, 1936, show the number of unemployed as compared with the numbers of employed persons grouped according to certain main categories:—

*Census of Population, 1936.*

	Males	Females
Employers .. .. .	60,000	15,000
Persons working on their own account ..	225,000	59,000
Relatives assisting .. .. .	197,000	66,000
Employees at work .. .. .	417,000	196,000
Unemployed .. .. .	83,000	12,000
<b>Total employed and unemployed ..</b>	<b>982,000</b>	<b>348,000</b>

Half of the occupied population is engaged in agriculture, and two-thirds of the employers, three-fourths of the persons working on their own account, nearly all the relatives assisting, but only one-fifth of the employees at work and the unemployed are agriculturists. In the average case unemployment is probably less severe for the agricultural labourer than for the town worker.

In non-agricultural employment, the unemployed in April, 1936, constituted 16 per cent. of employees at work and out of work for males and 6 per cent. for females. The figure for males is high because of the severe unemployment amongst unskilled workers, principally builders' labourers and road workers.

**Total Volume of Unemployment in Year 1935-36.**

In the Census of 1936 there was inaugurated a most important series of statistics showing the incidence of unemployment in the twelve months before the Census date, *as it affected the whole employee class.* The most important result of this enquiry was that of the 503,000 male employees in the country in April, 1936, only 175,000 or 35 per cent. experienced any unemployment in the twelve months April, 1935-April, 1936. The unemployment problem is of peculiar severity for only a limited number of the employee class.

The following summary shows the unemployment experience of males (i) in the State, and (ii) in Dublin and Dun Laoghaire, during the twelve months prior to the Census of 1936:—

*Male Employees, Census 1936.*

	State	Dublin and Dun Laoghaire
Who in one year 1935-36 experienced—		
No unemployment .. .. .	327,000	98,000
Less than 13 weeks unemployment ..	40,000	6,000
13-26           "           " .. .. .	39,000	5,000
26-39           "           " .. .. .	35,000	4,000
39-52           "           " .. .. .	34,000	3,000
Unemployed for whole year .. .. .	28,000	10,000
<b>Total employees, at work or out of work</b>	<b>503,000</b>	<b>126,000</b>

These numbers have some element of estimate since they are based on the approximately 80 per cent. of employees who furnished the

required information. The figures give some indication of the dimensions of the "hard core" of unemployment.

### The Unequal Incidence of Unemployment.

The problem of finding work for the workers is complicated by the fact that the incidence of unemployment is very unequally distributed between the different occupational grades:—

#### *Male Unemployment Experience, Year 1935-36.*

Occupational Grade	Total number of employees at work and out of work April, 1936	Estima'ed average number of weeks unemployment year 1935-36
	No.	Weeks
(1) Agriculture, mining, fishing ..	142,000	11.9
(2) Other production :		
(i) Skilled .. .. .	88,000	6.9
(ii) Unskilled .. .. .	91,000	18.3
(3) Transport :		
(i) Dock labourers .. .. .	5,000	20.6
(ii) Others .. .. .	56,000	8.0
(4) Other occupations (commercial, clerical, professional, personal, etc.) .. .. .	121,000	3.9
All employees, at work or out of work	503,000	10.4

The average duration of male unemployment in the year was ten weeks and this is about the rate obtaining for employees aged 20-54 years. The duration of unemployment increases regularly with age at the later ages, thus eleven weeks per annum at age 45-54 and eighteen weeks per annum at ages 65-69. This phenomenon is associated with the fact that with increasing age workers tend to drift into the unskilled class, with consequent severe unemployment experience.

### Live Register—Industrial Analysis.

The statistics in the foregoing paragraphs were derived from the Census of Population, 1936. As stated at the beginning of this paper unemployment statistics are derivable from the live registers kept at employment exchanges and according to these there has been a noticeable fall in the numbers of applicants registering for employment since pre-war as is shown in the following table:—

#### *Number of persons on the Live Register.*

Industrial Group	Mid-January, 1939	Mid-January, 1943	Percentage change
Agriculture, mining and quarrying, fishing .. .. .	36,755	29,533	—19.65
Other productive industry .. .. .	43,613	37,252	—14.59
Transport .. .. .	5,575	4,305	—22.78
Other employments .. .. .	17,123	16,243	—5.14
Total on Live Register .. .. .	103,066	87,333	—15.26

The decline in the number of registrants is due for the most part to the great migration of workers to Great Britain. Employment in the production of transportable industrial goods has declined by about 12,000.

### Family Circumstances.

A special inquiry was made some few years ago as to the family circumstances of *adult males* on the Live Register. In town areas and rural areas respectively the percentage distribution in certain types of families was as follows:—

*Adult Males on Live Register on 17th December, 1934 class'ied according to family circumstances.*

Type of family	Town Areas	Rural Areas	Total
	%	%	%
Families <i>no person</i> in which had work :			
With 5 or more persons .. .. .	19	27	24
With less than 5 persons .. .. .	41	34	37
Families in which <i>at least one person</i> had work :			
With 1/5 or less of the number in the family at work .. .. .	13	15	14
With more than 1/5 of the number in the family at work .. .. .	27	24	25
	100	100	100

On Census date, April, 1936, of the total of 95,000 persons returned as out of work, 38,000, or 40 per cent. were married or widowed and 57,000, or 60 per cent., were unmarried. Interpreting dependency in the wide sense of the Unemployment Assistance Act, 1933, in January, 1942, the number of dependents per 100 persons on the Live Register was 143. Applying this ratio to the 87,000 registrants in mid-January, it will be seen that unemployed plus dependants numbered about 212,000, or 7 per cent. of the population.

### Comparison of Unemployment Payments in Éire and in Great Britain and Northern Ireland 1938-39.

In the following table the total payments to recipients of unemployment insurance benefit and unemployment assistance in the year 1938-39 in this country and in Great Britain and Northern Ireland are considered in relation to the working population, numbers of workless and "means" in the respective areas. Some of the figures are estimates.

		Eire	Gt. Britain and N. Ireland
(1) Unemployment Insurance Benefit and Unemployment Assistance paid ..	£ m	2.0	92.5
(2) National Income .. .. .	„	161	4,595
(3) Taxable Income for Income Tax purposes (Actual Income less Allowances)	„	27.1	1,500
(4) Total Assessed Surtax Incomes over £2,000 per annum .. .. .	„	7.1	545
(5) Persons gainfully occupied .. ..	Thou.	1,323	23,425
(6) Average number on the Live Register	„	88	1,903
(7) Benefit plus Assistance as percentage of National Income .. .. .	%	1.2	2.0
(8) Benefit plus Assistance as percentage of Taxable Income for Income Tax purposes .. .. .	%	7.4	6.2
(9) Benefit plus Assistance as percentage of Surtax Incomes over £2,000 ..	%	28.2	17.0
(10) Benefit plus Assistance per person on the Live Register .. .. .	£	23	49
(11) Persons on Live Register as percentage of persons gainfully occupied	%	6.7	8.1

The following notes by way of qualification must be given in respect of some of items above :

(1) : The total borne in unemployment payments by contributory benefit is far greater in Great Britain.

(2) : National income figures are compiled on different principles by every compiler. The figure used above for this country is that compiled by G. A. Duncan (this *Journal*, 1940-41, p. 140). The British figure is that recently published in *An Analysis of War Finance and an Estimate of the National Income and Expenditure in 1938, 1940, 1941* (Cmd. 6347, p. 6). It is possible that the figures are sufficiently similar in content for the purpose for which they are required here.

(3) and (4) : The Irish total contains a higher percentage of low incomes than does the British total : accordingly the Irish income is less "taxable" than the British income. In particular the Irish income contains about £45 millions in respect of net output of agriculture and the average income in cash and kind of workers in agriculture in the year before the war was about 30s. per week. It is not known if the figures at (3) are strictly comparable.

(5) : These figures were calculated by applying the percentage occupied as shown at the latest Censuses to the estimated populations in 1939.

(6) : About half the unemployed in this country are rural dwellers amongst whom the incidence of unemployment is not generally so severe as amongst persons who dwell in towns, as do almost all the British unemployed. By any rational standard the average registrant in this country should not at "normal" times be paid as much as the average British registrant.

(8) and (9) : These percentages must not be taken as implying that taxpayers in these classes are solely responsible for unemployment payments. The object is only to show what relation these payments in the gross aggregate bear to the country's means.

In this country there are a large percentage of old persons and, in consequence, the cost of old age pensions is very high. In the year

1939 the amount spent on old age pensions in this State was £3,300,000 as compared with £49 millions in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Irish pensions are 2·0 per cent. of national income and 12·2 per cent. of taxable income as compared with the British percentage of 1·1 per cent. and 3·3 per cent. respectively. This State spends nearly twice as much on persons who are past their work as on persons "able and willing to work but unable to find suitable employment".

## 5. NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE.

By R. Ó BROLCHAIN, B.A.

The Irish National Health Insurance is a statutory compulsory insurance scheme covering all clerical workers whose rate of remuneration does not exceed £250 per annum, and all manual labourers, irrespective of remuneration.

The scheme is financed by a weekly contribution from the insured persons and from their employers, by a State grant of two-ninths of the expenditure on benefits and administration, and by interest income from reserves. The weekly contribution is 8d. (men) and 7d. (women), payable for each week or part of a week of employment. Of this amount the employer pays 4d. per week and the employee pays the balance—4d. (men) and 3d. (women).

The cash benefits payable consist of

*Sickness benefit*—15s. per week (men) and 12s. per week (women), payable during incapacity for work due to bodily or mental disablement. This rate is payable, subject to certain qualifying conditions, for the first 26 weeks of linked incapacity. Thereafter the benefit payable is

*Disablement benefit*, consisting of weekly payments of 7s. 6d. for both men and women alike. This benefit is payable as long as incapacity continues.

*Maternity benefit* is payable to any insured women or to the wife of any insured man on confinement. The amount of the benefit is £2.

*Marriage benefit* is payable to an insured woman on marriage, the amount of the benefit varying between 30s. and £3.

In addition to these cash benefits, the Society last year introduced, under special legislative sanction, without any increase in cost to employers or workers, a scheme of Additional Treatment Benefits, consisting of provision for the payment of the following treatments:

*Dental Benefit.* The full cost of all treatment dentistry and half the cost of dentures.

*Hospital and Convalescent Home Benefit.* Consisting of payments to Hospitals and Convalescent Homes so as to secure full benefits therein for members for a period not exceeding eight weeks (hospital) and two weeks (convalescent home).

*Medical and Surgical Appliances.* A contribution of approximately two-thirds of the cost of recognised appliances.

*Optical Benefit.* The provision of examination of the eyes by ophthalmic surgeons and a contribution of 10s. 6d. towards the cost of glasses.