

Unemployment statistics

37. The Prime Minister reported that the Privy Council Office had been asked to arrange for a study of the statistics measuring unemployment. There were two figures which had come to be used for the purpose. The first, derived from the Labour Force Survey, was the number of "persons without jobs and seeking work". The second came from a count on a certain day each month of applications for jobs on file at offices of the National Employment Service and was known as the "unplaced applicant" figure.

As a result of this study, a number of ways had been suggested by which the accuracy and significance of both sets of figures could be improved. During the investigation there had also been raised the question of conducting a single carefully planned survey of unplaced applicants, using Labour Force enumerator instructions and techniques, so as to demonstrate that unplaced applicants could be found in each of the Labour Force classifications. The recommendations made had been discussed with the officials concerned who had agreed that most were desirable and that, so far as possible, they should be implemented. It was felt, however, that the comprehensive survey of unplaced applicants should be deferred until the suggestions for improvement had been put into effect and their results were apparent.

It was now recommended, that a White Paper on Unemployment Statistics be prepared for presentation to Parliament describing the concept of unemployment, pointing out the difficulty of measuring the number of those really unemployed and describing the figures in detail and what they actually showed.

An explanatory memorandum had been circulated.

(Memorandum, Secretary to the Cabinet,
Nov. 29, 1954- Cab. Doc. 258-54).

38. In the course of discussion, it was stated that the work done thus far to improve these statistics had been useful, and the presentation of both figures together each month was particularly valuable. A White Paper along the lines described would be helpful to Parliament and to the public.

39. The Cabinet noted the report of the Prime Minister on unemployment statistics and agreed that a White Paper along the lines recommended be drafted for consideration and subsequent presentation to Parliament early in its next session; the document to be prepared by the appropriate departmental officials under the general direction of the Privy Council Office.

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