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THE PROGRESS OF LABOUR STATISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES.

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THE United States was the first nation to officially recognize the utility of statistics in the investigation of labour problems. Statisticians and economists of both the old and the new worlds had previously applied the method to independent lines of research, but, so far as I am aware, no Government office antedates the foundation of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labour Statistics in 1869. Furthermore, in no other country does the idea seem to have taken such deep root, or to have been carried to so complete a development. Within the last twenty-two years a National Department of Labour and twenty-five State bureaus have been called into existence.

I do not intend to discuss here the organization, powers, and duties of these various institutions. In an Appendix will be found a synopsis of their functions, drawn from the laws creating them. I prefer rather to review the progress which a score of years has disclosed.

One evidence of advance is the wide extent to which the movement has assumed. In the Northern and Middle States, where social conditions are more complex, these institutions have flourished best. Latterly they have struck root in the virgin soil of the West and the industrial regions of the South. Where they were not recognized as performing some useful function, their numbers would not have so steadily increased.

The United States afford a peculiarly favourable field of operations. The working classes are, generally speaking, well-organized and intelligent. They are for the most