

UNEMPLOYMENT - An International and a Communal Problem.

At a time when unemployment is widespread the world over, when the word is on everybody's lips, and when it has become front-page material for every newspaper it is no light responsibility to appear before you as an expert on that subject. Because the two questions you will most want me to discuss are the causes of unemployment, and the remedies for it. And that is a task not merely difficult, but almost verging on the courageous.

I am somehow persuaded - perhaps quite wrongly - that the politician may be privileged by being allowed to discuss the subject without being very precise about the causes of unemployment or definite about remedies. Or rather, since that is perhaps unfair, - though I am, of course, not referring to any particular politician - the politician is permitted the much easier task of telling you the facts - or some facts - of the current situation, and either criticising or defending particular policies. But it is expected of the expert - or as I should prefer to say, the student or social investigator - that he should seek, and give if he can, a comprehensive and balanced account of the problem, and an account not confined to some particular time. But not only is "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" difficult to attain in economic affairs. It is unfortunately the case that comprehensive diagnosis, which attempts to take account of all the elements in the situation, is apt to be somewhat ~~involved or~~ cumbersome, to involve details or qualifications to an extent which does not satisfy those who would prefer a simple answer, whether to the questionings of their social conscience, or to provide the basis for a policy of action. The partial or half-truth is not only easier to discover and to state, but - because life is short, or at any rate, busy - is often more willingly received.

With so much, however, by way of preliminary - which will serve me as apology either for venturing too much or too little into detail - I will undertake to discuss both causes and remedies of unemployment this evening.