

- day-to-day or short-period fluctuations, important in some fields; seasonal fluctuations; cyclical (or "trade-cycle") fluctuations; trends of technical progress in various economic spheres; dislocations in international commerce or international finance. Although we know in general terms - certainly more adequately than before the war - the cause, character, and effects of these fluctuations, it is also true that there is abundant room for further detailed analysis and investigation in each field.

The "survey-method" or sociological approach

(b) The study of unemployment as it exists in a particular community. The economic and social conditions which attend and determine it, the practical problems of dealing with it, in the various spheres - social, industrial, and governmental - in which unemployment problems arise. Unemployment of course is to be interpreted widely: it constitutes a problem of which unemployment relief is only a part - a problem, in the last analysis, of the functioning of industry and of social institutions and organisation. The "community" to be used as the area of study, also, though it may well be the city in the first instance, must sooner or later extend to the whole country, and indeed beyond.

In pursuing the first type of investigation, we concentrate primarily on the economic "causes" of unemployment. The second treats it as a problem of sociology, in the older sense of that word - a problem involving all the social sciences (including economics). It gives us more immediately the opportunity of bringing to the problem the aid and experience of specialists other than the economist and the sociologist^u - of enlisting and co-ordinating the contributions of those trained primarily in psychology, education, law, or medicine. Unemployment is a social problem, with ramifications in all these fields. And the divisions of the social sciences are, or should be, ones of convenience only. They are justified only if they are a step towards the more efficient and comprehensive attack on social problems.

An approach which recognises this helps to satisfy two needs which are evident in the field of social science research to-day. There is the need for making the research-student or investigator engaged in one specialised field aware of the other aspects of his problem and other approaches to it, and of the fact that his work is really significant only in relation to these. This is partly a question of training, but partly also a question merely of ensuring his contact with workers in related fields. There is, secondly, the need for efforts directed to securing some balanced or authoritative pronouncement on social problems. In the university we already have the first requisite - men trained in the various social sciences, and also in a position to employ their knowledge or express their views impartially. The task is to co-ordinate those resources (and to gain the co-operation of bodies outside the university interested in these aims). It is undoubtedly difficult, and an effort from which "results" cannot be expected except with some time and care. But there should be little question as to whether it is worth while.

The "survey-method" would take full account of what the first approach outlined (the study of industrial fluctuations) has to contribute. Our knowledge in this field would influence any findings revealed or suggested by research. It should be available so far as possible to research-students through the medium of lecture courses. And purely economic research, if in certain fields such limitation is satisfactory and its contribution clear (and this would apply to other departments) would certainly not be excluded.

^u using the term here in its more restricted modern sense.