

United States; every new immigrant, in order to live, must take away the job from some one else who has been here before. On closer study, however, it is found that unemployment is not the effect of an absolute surplus population. It arises, notwithstanding a growing demand for labor, from the fluctuations in the distribution of the demand. The most generally recognized cause of unemployment is seasonal variation of business activity. There are trades dependent largely upon climatic conditions and partly upon social customs. In the period of maximum activity the demand for labor in such trades may often so far exceed the supply as to necessitate overtime work; yet this shortage of labor will not save a portion of the force from idleness at other times of the year. The only class of labor which is capable of shifting from one industry to another in response to variations in demand is unskilled labor. But the localization of industries sets a limit to the mobility of unskilled labor. In order to eliminate unemployment it would be necessary to dovetail the busy and the slack seasons in the various industries upon such a plan as would produce an even distribution of the work of the nation over all seasons of the year. This might be possible if all mines, mills, and transportation lines were operated by one nation-wide trust. So long, however, as production is controlled by many competing employers, each subject to his own vicissitudes of business, insecurity of employment is inevitable. The normal state of every industry is to have a larger force than can ever find employment in it at any one time. The labor reserve is as much a part of the industrial system as the regular force.

Still, the labor market being normally overstocked, it sounds plausible that the immigrant, who is accustomed to a lower standard of living at home than the American workman, will be able to underbid and displace his American competitor. If this view were correct, we should find, in the first place, a higher percentage of unemployment among the native than among the foreign-born breadwinners.