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## Review

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to avoid mistakes. The Government has done much to improve the lot of the agriculturist, who is now enjoying unexampled prosperity; and it is time for both the Government and the leading minds of the Province to devote more attention and effort towards ameliorating the condition of the hereditary artisans, who have not received their full share of the recent great increase in material wealth. Mr. Latifi's compilation will be of much value in aiding them to arrive at a decision as to the best steps to take in order to attain this object.

J. WILSON

*The Liverpool Docks Problem.* By R. WILLIAMS. (Liverpool: Northern Publishing Co. 1912. 6d.)

MR. WILLIAMS' small book on *The Liverpool Docks Problem* is more important than many lengthier discourses upon social questions, and it derives a special significance from the weight of authority which stands behind its exposition and proposals. Mr. Williams is Divisional Officer for the North-Western Division of the Labour Exchanges, and has had quite exceptional opportunities, which he has used to the full, for studying from inside the whole problem of casual labour. His proposals have stood the searching criticisms of the shipowners and dock labourers of Liverpool, and have received, we understand, the *imprimatur* of organisations representing both parties. If, as is probable, they become the basis of a practical experiment in decasualising dock labour at Liverpool, and if, as there is no reason to doubt, that experiment proves a success, the scheme outlined by Mr. Williams can hardly fail to be tried at other ports where the problem, though smaller in size, is similar in kind. No doubt there are numerous practical difficulties which cannot be foreseen. But Mr. Williams' suggestions certainly seem, on a first examination, to bring us to the edge of treating successfully the particular type of unemployment with which he is concerned.

The picture which Mr. Williams gives of casual labour at the Liverpool Docks is that with which we have already been made familiar by Miss Rathbone and Mr. Charles Booth. But his quantitative analysis of it—and in this matter quantities are all-important—is far the completest which has yet been made. By enlisting the assistance of shipowners, of trade union officials, and a corps of special investigators, he has been able to state approximately the maximum number of men required during the month of January last, an exceptionally busy month in an exceptionally

busy season, and therefore offering an excellent sample for his purpose. The figure obtained, after allowance for overtime, is 19,861. Now the membership of the Dockers' Union is 29,500, and when one has deducted about 2,300 men as representing bargemen, etc., one may say that the total number of men dependent on the Docks for a living is 27,200. Therefore, between the maximum number of men required in a very busy month and the total number of men normally looking for work at the Docks, there is a difference of, at least, 7,000. In other words, about *one-quarter* of the dockers are economically superfluous.

Mr. Williams' next point is that the existence of this immense surplus is the inevitable result of a system under which each firm engages its own men at its own stand independently of every other. This point has been worked out so fully in Mr. Beveridge's book on unemployment, that it need not be elaborated here. But Mr. Williams' illustrations of the way in which casual labour is created give an impressive reality to the theoretical argument. "I know actual cases," he says, "where an employer, who could easily have employed fifty men on weekly wages, peddled the work out among one hundred (giving each man approximately three days a week), simply because he occasionally wanted one hundred men all at once and wanted to make sure of having them. Some foremen actually blacklist a man if he doesn't 'show up' next morning." He calculates (a) that at present, out of about 28,000 men, 70·4 per cent. work between three and four days a week, 12·4 per cent. between three and two days, 5·4 per cent. between one and two days, and 11·9 per cent. less than one day; (b) that if labour were organised in the manner explained by him, out of 15,673 men employed, 56·4 per cent. would work six days a week, 18·2 between five and six days, 6·2 between four and five days, and the remainder various less numbers of days. Clearly, this conclusion is of immense practical importance. Not less important is the proof given by Mr. Williams that the existing system is—on a long view—as disadvantageous to the interests of the employers as to those of the employed.

Mr. Williams' proposals are of so far-reaching a character that one would hesitate as to their practicability unless they had already been endorsed by the chief bodies concerned in the administration of the port. In brief, they aim at doing two things: (i) decasualising labour; (ii) relieving employers of some of the work which they would incur under the Insurance Act, by centralising the payment of wages and deduction of contributions in offices staffed by the Board of Trade. Leaving (ii) on

one side, let me summarise the suggestions as to decasualisation. He proposes that five "clearing houses" shall be established in close proximity to the docks; that on a specified date all persons shall be given a tally; and that after that date no firm shall employ anyone who has not got such a tally to show. The men thus registered will fall into two groups: "company's men" and "clearing house men," the former having a tally which entitles them to preferential employment by particular firms, the latter a tally which entitles them to be called on by the clearing house when employers desire to obtain men through it. A foreman will engage men at the ordinary "stands" existing at present. But before he puts on any "clearing house" men, he will have to exhaust all the "company's" or "preference" men. Each group of firms will be in telephonic communication with the clearing house in its area, and each clearing house will be similarly connected with a central clearing house. Any firm short of men will draw first on its own clearing house, and then, through the central clearing house, on reserves of men who may be unemployed elsewhere.

Such, in bare outline, is that part of Mr. Williams' scheme which relates to decasualisation. What exactly would it effect, if carried out? It would mean in the first place, that the influx of fresh recruits into the industry would be checked until such time as it is thought advisable to issue fresh tallies. The existing surplus, though not suddenly diminished, would gradually correct itself, as the numbers looking for work fell through death and other causes. It would mean, in the second place, that each firm would cease to keep its own reserve, and that men who are unemployed at one "stand" would be drafted to another. The change at first, no doubt, would not be very large, because the existing surplus is so enormous. But this is an advantage. No scheme which proposed suddenly to deprive of work 6,000 or 7,000 would have any chance of acceptance. Again, the adoption of the scheme will involve a certain amount of trouble and forethought by employers. But, on the one hand, the fact that its administration is to be in the hands of a joint committee of employers and workers is likely to ensure that reasonable consideration is given to the practical exigencies of business. And, on the other hand, Mr. Williams has a tempting bait to offer. He proposes to throw on the clearing house the payment of wages and the deduction of contributions under the Insurance Act. This part of the scheme is too complicated to explain in a short review. But the saving to employers which it will involve, if carried out,

will be considerable. Altogether, Mr. Williams' pamphlet contains the most hopeful scheme yet put forward for dealing with the organisation of labour at ports.

R. H. TAWNEY

*Problems of Boy Life.* Edited by J. H. WHITEHOUSE, M.P.  
(London : P. S. King and Son. 1912. Pp. 342. Price  
10s. 6d. net.)

A BOOK of this size and at this price on the problems of boy life should either give a full and comprehensive view of the whole question or, dealing with special aspects, it should embody the results of research. There is no explicit statement in the book as to the object in view. Judged from either standpoint, the book is far from satisfactory. In spite of the fact that eleven writers contribute to it, the whole ground has certainly not been covered. The treatment is unsystematic and lacking in proportion. The work of the juvenile labour exchanges and advisory committees receives scant notice. The organisation and problems of the various kinds of lads' clubs might with advantage have been dealt with, as well as the question of trade schools. One problem of boy life which so far has not received the attention it deserves, and which the book practically ignores, is that of juvenile unemployment. The matter is certainly referred to in connection with the proposal to establish schools for unemployed boys, in a passage which indicates that the writers misunderstand the suggestion. Even though attendance at such schools "would be of short duration," it would not be "worthless" by any means. Little fresh knowledge would be acquired, but on the other hand, the demoralisation consequent upon even short spells of juvenile unemployment would probably be averted. The great value of such classes, however, would be that, working on experimental lines, knowledge would be obtained of how to deal with the young out-of-work when the Government discovers the folly of allowing thousands of boys to receive unemployment benefit at the rate of 3s. 6d. a week without requiring some sort of guarantee that the time will not be spent uselessly and aimlessly.

*Problems of Boy Life* does not add much new knowledge either of facts or methods of treatment. Mr. Tawney's "Economics of Boy Labour" (the bulk of which appeared in the ECONOMIC JOURNAL, December, 1909) is, of course, an important contribution, as also is Mr. Norman Chamberlain's study of the station lounge. Many of the chapters contain little or