

OTHERS' VIEWS

THE UNEMPLOYED AND THE UNEMPLOYABLE.

Wall Street Journal: It is one of our popular pastimes to bait the police force. Being an intensely democratic people, we encourage our legislators to pass an immense mass of fool laws which we forthwith proceed to ignore. A bad law is a tempting instrument of blackmail, and if the police try to enforce it that is the inference most generally drawn. The policeman has plenty of faults and deficiencies, in which respect he is strikingly like the rest of us.

But he does a good deal of hard and thankless work in his hours of duty, and also something on the side, as, for instance, the committee of five inspectors which reported recently on the problem of unemployment in New York. It need hardly be said this is a topic which bears upon all corporate industry and is one which has never been courageously faced. This report is one of the best of the kind which has ever been made. It deals with the matter with humanity and understanding.

Its most important conclusion is the division of the idlers into unemployed and unemployable. Getting work for the unemployed, except in the most depressed trade conditions, has not been found by the police to be an insoluble problem. The man who is willing to work, and able to work, can find employment of some sort if he will put his pride in his pocket and take what he can get while he keeps his eyes open for something better.

But the real problem is the unemployable. To a large extent he is a degenerate, a victim of drugs or alcohol, mentally or physically defective, and not worth any man's money. Moreover, the unemployed tend to drift into the unemployable class. The habit of idleness, even where it involves living upon the fringe of starvation, grows upon the man until his faculty of application becomes atrophied. He professes to be looking for work, but it is only that he can dodge quickly if he sees any.

When the police force is as perfect as its critics demand, we shall all be so perfect ourselves that we shall not need policemen. But in the coming winter the annual migration of tramps and wastrels to New York City will once more raise the old problem and the old agitation. It is not a problem to be settled by the policeman's club, but there is an urgent call for drastic treatment. Without saying that the habitual unemployable should be treated like the habitual criminal, society has some coercive rights in the matter.

Perhaps those people who are interested in this most vital problem will read the Police Report, and see if they cannot devise a broad and humane remedy, devoid of sentimentality and based upon common sense.