

# Three Aspects of Labor Dynamics

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## FOREWORD

WHEN THE STUDY from which the present volume has resulted was planned and initiated, unemployment still overshadowed all other labor market problems. Controversies over the number of unemployed and over the degree to which unemployment might become a permanent problem occupied the forefront of interest. Now, however, an almost complete reversal has occurred in at least the popular interest in labor market problems. Discussions of labor shortages have almost obliterated concern with unemployment issues.

In spite of this shift in the public interest, periods of extensive unemployment during the past three decades remain of interest to students of labor market phenomena. They provide clues to many of the problems that may arise during post-war readjustment. Perhaps more important, much of the most detailed labor market information available is to be found in the surveys and enumerations made during the depression years.

The term "labor dynamics," interpreted broadly, includes all kinds of variations in the labor force of the nation—the entry of new generations into gainful work and retirement and death of aged workers, internal migrations, occupational and industrial shifts, turnover of the working force in industrial establishments and between employment and unemployment, the temporary entry of marginal workers into gainful pursuits and their withdrawal from the labor market because of changing business conditions, and the like. Some of these shifts are not more than temporary variations in the behavior of individuals; others affect their work status for a longer period of time, occasionally for the rest of their lives. A complete picture of labor dynamics, which would summarize all these ins and outs, ups and downs, backs and forths, cannot be obtained without preliminary monographic research on different types of related phenomena. The present report deals with three specific kinds of shifts of the working population:

turnover of the working force in establishments, turnover of the unemployed, and forced entries into the labor market during depressions.

This study was a natural further step growing out of Mr. Woytinsky's earlier investigations of labor market data with respect to major social security issues, which resulted in the publication of *Labor in the United States* in 1938 and of *Seasonal Variations in Employment in the United States* in 1939. Summarizations of particular sections of the present report have been issued at several stages. In March 1939 the Committee on Social Security published a pamphlet on "Recent Trends in Labor Turnover, Their Causes, and Their Effects on the Labor Market," which summarized briefly much of the ground covered by Part I of the present volume. In January 1940 the Committee published a pamphlet on "Additional Workers and the Volume of Unemployment in the Depression," which gave a brief statement of the major points covered by Part III. Certain other materials developed during the study which are not included in the present report were published in August 1939 by the Social Security Board, as its Research and Statistics Bureau Memorandum No. 40, under the title "Fluctuations in Employment Covered by the Federal Old-Age Insurance Program." Since the publication of these preliminary sections, the manuscript has been extensively revised and additional data that became available during 1940 and 1941 have been introduced.

Special acknowledgment is made on behalf of the author of the assistance given him and the materials made available to him during the study by the Bureau of Research and Statistics of the Social Security Board. The statistical tables were computed by Helen Anderson and the charts were prepared by Harry de Mars of the Board's staff under the general supervision of the author. Statistical material in the text was brought up to date and assistance given in the final preparation of the manuscript by Emma S. Woytinsky. Mary Charles Cole prepared the manuscript for publication.

While the study has been sponsored by the Committee on Social Security, the resulting report has not been submitted to the Committee for formal review or approval. The statements and con-

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clusions of the author are therefore entirely his own, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or attitudes of members of the Committee or of the Social Science Research Council.

PAUL WEBBINK, *Director*  
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