

try—about 3 percent of contract construction firms have 50 or more employees, and over half have three or less employees. Like agriculture, this is an expression of the small entrepreneur exercising his privileges under the free enterprise system.

The symptoms of seasonality we have found indicate a widespread, chronic situation:

August employment in contract construction for the Nation as a whole is typically about one-third higher than February employment.

Unemployment rates in 1967 ranged from 13 percent in February to 4.3 percent in August for this industry.

The pattern of seasonal employment has not improved significantly since World War II.

The unemployment rate is about double that of all other industries combined. For 1967 the nationwide rate for experienced private wage and salary workers was 3.9 percent while in construction it was 7.3 percent. From 1957 through 1967 the ratio of unemployment in the construction industry to all other industries averaged about 2.1 to 1.

The impact of unemployment on the individual employed in the construction industry is severe. In 1966, for instance, 27 percent of all construction workers out of work for at least 1 continuous week during the year compared with 14 percent of manufacturing workers and 13 percent of all nonagricultural workers. This pattern, of course, varies by geographical area.

In the course of a single year the contract construction segment of the industry adds as many workers between February and August as are employed in the motor vehicle manufacturing industry of this Nation.

We learned these facts rather quickly. But let's examine the details subsequently found:

Site preparation and road building operations are extremely susceptible to bad weather and the workers who perform these jobs are particularly subject to recurring periods of unemployment. What to do with frozen or muddy earth is the single largest technical problem to be solved in this area, although a start has been made.

Even in building construction, once off the ground and under cover, the problem is rapidly diminished, but by no means is it ended. Successive groups of workers on individual projects are employed with differing seasonal patterns.

The workers in such trades as plumbing, electrical work, and sheet metal work generally have longer average annual employment opportunities than do laborers, although seasonality has an adverse impact on all crafts.

Even in the peak season the unemployment rates hit all crafts, but affect the laborers to the greatest extent. While construction laborers as an annual average have about twice the unemployment rate of construction craftsmen, the unemployment rate for craftsmen declines by two-thirds or more between February and August, while for laborers it declines by about one-half.

The rates for construction craftsmen average consistently higher than for craftsmen in the economy as a whole: In 1967, for instance, 4.7 percent against 2.5 percent.