

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPARISONS

With almost one in five of the Irish labour force on the live register and emigration running at close to thirty thousand a year the goal of providing a job for everyone who wants one seems very far away in this country. Full employment as a central policy objective is fast slipping down the political agenda. There are even those who argue that full employment is a thing of the past and our central concern should be learning to live with unemployment. This implies that mass unemployment is becoming the norm rather than the exception in advanced economies. A quick comparison with some other small European countries suggests this is far from the truth.

- * Austria has an unemployment rate of around 6%
- * In May of last year registered unemployment in Denmark stood at 7,6%
- * Finland has an unemployment rate of around 5,5%.
- * Norway has a workforce about the same size as our own. In June '87 there were 28,800 people on the Norwegian live register, that's an unemployment rate of 1,8 % !

Of course we are not suggesting that we can simply copy the policies adopted in any of the above countries. The experience of other countries does, however, suggest that something approaching full employment is not an impossible goal and is a challenge that should not be dismissed lightly. ●