

Other major items contributing to the increase in votes are war pensions, health and education expenditure, and a substantial increase in social security benefits necessitating a corresponding increase in the transfer from the Consolidated Fund to the Social Security Fund.

As regards the Social Security Fund, expenditure is estimated at £22,571,000 and receipts at £21,501,000, the difference of £1,070,000 being met out of the opening balances which on the 1st April stood at £2,389,702.

Social
Security Fund,
1945-46.

The estimated receipts and expenditure under the usual main classifications are :—

RECEIPTS				£
Social security charge	..	..	..	13,750,000
Transfer from Consolidated Fund	..	..	..	7,000,000
Registration fee and miscellaneous	..	..	..	751,000
				£21,501,000
				£21,501,000

EXPENDITURE				£
Monetary benefits	..	..	..	16,571,000
Medical benefits	..	..	..	5,192,000
				£
Administration expenses	..	..	..	683,000
Emergency benefits	..	..	..	125,000
				808,000
				£22,571,000

In accord with the announced policy of the Government to ensure a minimum family income, legislation will be introduced during the present session to provide for a minimum wage for all adult workers, male and female.

Minimum
family
income.

To ensure a minimum family income of £5 per week during periods of sickness, unemployment, or invalidity, it is proposed to pay benefits of £2 each for the father and mother with 10s. for each child.

Corresponding payments will be made to those who qualify for miners' and war veterans' benefits. It is also proposed to provide a benefit for a widowed mother of £2 per week with an additional 10s. for each child, and provision will be made in special cases for an extra widowed mothers' domestic allowance to meet the circumstances of homes where there are several children requiring the continuous personal care of the mother. This allowance will be paid at the discretion of the Commissioner of Social Security.

The benefit for widows who have not had children and who otherwise qualify will be increased from the present rate of £1 5s. to £1 10s. per week.

The rate of benefit for those under twenty years of age who qualify on account of invalidity, unemployment, or sickness will be increased from the present rate of 10s. 6d. to £1 per week.

Age benefits for those who qualify will be paid at the rate of £2 per week for each person at the age of sixty years. In cases where the wife of a beneficiary does not qualify for age benefit in her own right, a payment of £1 per week will be made. All the amended benefits will operate as from 1st October next.

The estimated cost of the increase in the benefits for the balance of the present year is as follows:—

				£
Invalids	..	..	..	195,000
Sickness	..	..	..	185,000
Unemployment	..	..	..	36,000
Widows	..	..	..	260,000
Age	..	..	..	1,100,000
Miners	..	..	..	25,000
War Veterans	..	..	..	43,000
				£1,844,000
				£1,844,000

The cost for a full year is estimated to be approximately £3,688,000.

Proposals are under examination for the improvement of family benefits, and legislation for this purpose will be introduced during the present session.