

Under the heading "Medical benefits," which includes maternity benefits, the estimated requirements for 1948-49 are £7,562,000 as compared with the actual expenditure of £7,021,000 for 1947-48.

The maternity benefits payable to public maternity hospitals and licensed private maternity hospitals were increased in 1947 from a maximum of £11 to £15 per case.

As from 1st February, 1947, the treatment carried out under the State School Dental Service has been extended, and dental attention is now available to adolescent children up to and including the age of fifteen years as a benefit under the Social Security Act.

During the past year the provisions of the Social Security Hospital Benefits for Out-patients Regulations 1947 were extended to include the provision of certain artificial aids. Contact lenses and hearing-aids became available during 1947, and as from 1st April, 1948, 80 per cent. of the cost of artificial limbs will be borne from the Social Security Fund.

A survey of ambulance services throughout New Zealand has recently been conducted preparatory to framing regulations covering the introduction of an ambulance benefit under the Social Security Act.

During the past year (1947-48) the Government arranged for the setting-up of a Medical Services Committee to examine and report on all aspects of the working of the Medical and Pharmaceutical Benefits and to suggest improvements to the existing procedure. The Committee has now completed its findings and its report is at present under consideration by the Government.

As I have mentioned, it is estimated that the revenue to the Fund from the social security charge will be £30,000,000, or approximately £3,750,000 in excess of last year. This increase is anticipated on account of the charge being payable for a full year as against a half year in 1947-48, and also to the additional revenue which is expected on account of improved prices for primary products.

War Expenses Account

At this time last year I said that no further borrowing for War Expenses Account would be required and that it was a good thing to reach the end of borrowing for war purposes. I am happy to say that, despite expenditure of some £17,694,000 last year, the War Expenses Account was wholly financed from current receipts and the transfer of the surplus from Consolidated Fund from the previous year.

Details of the expenditure are: Armed Services, £8,541,000; rehabilitation and gratuities, £6,199,000; redemption of war debt, £3,300,000; and miscellaneous, £63,000; a total of £18,103,000, reduced