

In 1933-34 there were some five to six thousand single men in land-development, forestry, and public-works camps receiving about 10s. per week and keep for manual labour; married men were paid from £1 17s. 6d. to £2 10s. per week. To-day road-making, land-development, and forestry-work is paid for at standard rates of wages. As previously mentioned, it is an advantage to show at this stage to what extent the Employment Promotion Fund has been used to promote employment, and for this reason the circumstances have been fully set out in Table VII of the Appendix; but the figure of unemployment is still that which represents those people for whom work is not available and who, pending their absorption into employment, are receiving from the State a measure of unemployment-relief assistance amounting to a lesser figure than the reward for full-time employment under existing industrial conditions.

PROMOTION OF EMPLOYMENT.

As from 1st April last this Division ceased to provide financial assistance to industry generally, but continued the provision of subsidized labour for restoration of flood, &c., damage, as well as providing assistance enabling the training under Scheme 16 of carpenters, joiners, and bricklayers.

Unremitting endeavours have been made to arrange full-time employment for unemployed physically fit men, generous subsidies having been made available to local bodies for this purpose: this policy is being continued. The abolition of the Employment Promotion Fund involves dependence upon other funds, and because of this it has become necessary to review the condition of subsidies.

With a view to compensating for a shortage of youths and absorbing a greater number of adults in normal private employment, a plan is being developed whereunder the Department would subsidize the wages of physically fit and otherwise suitable young men during a period of training. This is considered a particularly desirable move, inasmuch as success will endow each individual with a permanent occupational asset and ultimately render him independent of State assistance while yet further meeting the call of industry for skilled operatives. The development of such a plan is not unattended with difficulties, but it is expected that these will be met in discussion with representatives of all organizations concerned.

Any statement in connection with the promotion of employment would be incomplete without brief reference to the general conditions governing the granting of subsidies to employing authorities for full-time subsidized employment known as Scheme 13.

In order to give effect to the policy of placing all fit unemployed men in full-time work, subsidies are made available to local authorities—City and Borough Councils, County Councils, River and Drainage Boards, School Committees, sports bodies, and other social institutions not established for profit—for the full-time employment of registered and eligible labour at award rates of pay on developmental works which would not be put in hand without State assistance. The works undertaken include the formation, widening, metalling, &c., of streets and roads; footpath construction, kerbing, and channelling; local-body water-supply and sewerage schemes; land-drainage, river-clearing, river protection, &c., afforestation; formation, levelling, improvements, &c., to parks, reserves, domains, school-grounds, hospital-grounds, &c.; flood-damage restoration.

Subsidies approved under the scheme range from £1 10s. and £2 5s. per man-week for single and married men respectively to, in some cases, the full wages cost. The men are employed under ordinary industrial conditions, and are paid in terms of the award to which the employing authority is a party. In cases where an employer is not cited as a party to an award the work is carried out under the conditions and at the rates of pay prescribed by the Public Works Workers' agreement, 1936.

It has always been an essential condition of employment on full-time subsidized work under Scheme 13 that the applicant must be registered and eligible to receive unemployment relief. This condition continues to apply, with the result that, on the coming into operation of the Social Security legislation, men of sixty years and over who are entitled to receive an age benefit under the Act are not eligible for placement on Scheme 13. Nevertheless, an exception is made in the cases of those men of sixty years and over whose wives are not eligible in their own right for a Social Security benefit or who are widowers and have one or more dependent children under sixteen years of age. Such men are still regarded as eligible for placement under the scheme provided that they are fit to undertake sustained manual work of the type offering and that they forego the age benefit for themselves and their dependants. Where insufficient work is offering in the urban centres to give employment to all fit registrants, preference of employment is, for obvious reasons, given to married men, and endeavours are made to place the single men on work of a national character subsidized or otherwise.

EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION FUND.

Details of the receipts and payments for the year ended 31st March, 1939, are contained in the audited statement as per Table V of the Appendix hereto, while a summarized comparison of the figures for the year under review with those of previous years is set out in Table I.

The year commenced with a balance of £1,158,890. The revenue received during the year amounted to £5,522,462, as against £5,145,101 for the previous year, an increase of £377,361. The sum of £468,588 was received from the registration levy, £3,340,406 from wages-tax, £1,652,208 from the charge on "other income," and £61,260 from penalties for late payment of the levy, interest, and other miscellaneous receipts.

Compared with the previous year the revenue from employment charge increased by £336,449, which represents an increase of 7.23 per cent. The increase in the revenue from wages-tax was £312,916, or 10.33 per cent. This represents an increase of £9,387,480 during the year ended 31st March, 1939, in the amount of salaries and wages paid to persons liable for the tax, as compared with an increase of £12,000,000 in the year ended 31st March, 1937, and £13,100,000 in the year ended 31st March, 1938.

The increase in the revenue from the special charge on "other income" as compared with the collections for the financial year ended 31st March, 1938, is £23,533, or 1.44 per cent. This represents an increase of £705,990 during the year ended 31st March, 1938, in the incomes liable for this charge.