

SMALL-FARM PLAN.

Under this scheme an allowance up to £1 per week was made available to the occupiers of small-farm allotments to assist them in meeting living-expenses. The scheme has been attended with excellent results, as the measure of assistance made available has enabled many of the occupiers to carry on until such time as their properties have been providing sufficient income to enable them to become self-supporting.

As at 31st March, 1938, £72,450 was granted to 839 occupiers. Assistance by this Department has, however, been terminated as at this date, and the scheme will in future be administered entirely by the Department of Lands and Survey.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR RELIEF, 1938-39.

The concessions usually granted to unemployment-relief recipients at Christmas were repeated during the 1938-39 holiday season, the expenditure in this direction being £32,845, as compared with £45,730 in 1937.

A Christmas bonus of £2 for married men and £1 for single men was granted to all those who were on sustenance or in receipt of part-time work-relief in the week ended 3rd December or who became eligible for relief in either of the following three weeks and had actually been in receipt of assistance under one of the above relief measures at any time during the preceding three months. Men employed on part-time relief works, those on the gold-prospecting scheme, and certain special classes of workers were granted a holiday of two weeks on full pay in addition to the Christmas bonus.

Where men were employed on full-time relief works (Scheme 13) at standard rates of pay and the whole of the wages cost was met from the Employment Promotion Fund, the works were closed down for the two weeks ended 31st December and 7th January, and the men were paid such holiday pay as had accrued due to them under the particular award or agreement under which they were working. Where such holiday pay amounted to less than the equivalent of two weeks' sustenance, an *ex gratia* payment was made to supplement the holiday pay to the sustenance allocation.

In those cases where the Department was not meeting the full wages cost of Scheme 13 works, the question of holidays was left largely to the discretion of the employing authorities, but where the men received less by way of holiday pay and wages in the above two weeks than the equivalent of two weeks' sustenance, then an *ex gratia* payment was made to supplement their income from wages and holiday pay to the sustenance allocation.

The concessions thus granted to full-time workers ensured that all men were paid for holidays legally due to them, and that no man received less than the equivalent of two weeks' sustenance.

RECORD OF PAYMENT OF SUSTENANCE.

With the coming into force of the Social Security Act from the 1st April, 1939, and the payment thereunder of unemployment benefits, the method formerly adopted of administering State relief to unemployed persons lapsed. This form of relief ("sustenance") extended generally from October, 1933, to the end of March, 1939. Originally, applicants for relief were obliged to perform some kind of work in return for their relief pay, but towards the end of 1933 it became evident that local employing authorities, particularly in the main urban areas, where the majority of relief workers were domiciled, were meeting greater difficulties, both from a financial point of view in meeting supervision and other costs and in finding suitable work. Some local bodies, also, were finding that all their useful works of a nature applicable to the absorption of relief labour were rapidly nearing completion. From this state of affairs it would have been only a short step to the employment of relief workers on essential jobs in the nature of ordinary maintenance, and the only practicable alternative which arose was the granting of sustenance payments without work.

A scale of sustenance payments ranging from 10s. per week to £1 16s. per week in the four main centres and from 7s. 6d. per week to £1 10s. per week in secondary centres was instituted as a trial, it being the policy that no worker placed on sustenance should receive more as a sustenance payment than the amount for which he would ordinarily have been eligible as a relief worker. With the general revision of relief rates in January, 1935, the scale of sustenance payments was increased throughout; also provision was made for a third division applicable to smaller centres where the introduction of sustenance was considered to be desirable. A further general increase in sustenance payments took effect from the 1st July, 1935, with the addition of a bonus of 2s. per week for single men and 3s. per week for married men.

From the 2nd March, 1936, all districts were placed on an equal footing with the four main centres, in which previously the relief rates had been higher. This resulted in an increase of 4s. 6d. per week for single men and 6s. per week for married men in the country districts, and an increase of 2s. per week for single men and 3s. for married men in the secondary towns. Then, as from the 1st June, the sustenance rates were further substantially increased in all districts. Again as from the 30th November, 1936, single men were granted an increase of 3s. per week and married men 6s. per week. While no further actual increase in rates was made in so far as those classes of recipients ranging from single men to married men with seven or more children were concerned, it was arranged from the 31st January, 1938, to extend the classification from "I" (a married man with seven or more children) to "M" (a married man with eleven or more children). This resulted in increasing the previous maximum of the sustenance scale (£3 3s.) to £3 19s. per week.

The progress of the increases from January, 1935, together with those effected subsequently, are traversed in the table appearing below.

The full details concerning the payment of sustenance over the years 1934-39 have been presented in this report in order that this aspect of unemployment history may be finally and succinctly recorded.