

MONTHLY BENEFITS

AGE-BENEFITS

During the year 10,728 new benefits were granted and 1,015 applications were declined, also 109,605 existing benefits were renewed for a further year after individual investigation. At the 31st March, 1948, there were 117,161 benefits in force, an increase of 1,874 over the figure for the previous year.

The expenditure increased from £11,881,119 for the year ended 31st March, 1947, to £12,976,286 for the year ended 31st March, 1948, an increase of £1,095,167.

WIDOWS' BENEFITS

During the year 2,075 new benefits were granted, 577 applications were declined, and 12,012 existing benefits were reviewed and renewed for a further year. The number of women receiving widows' benefit increased from 13,133 at 31st March, 1947, to 14,145 at the 31st March, 1948, an increase of 1,012.

Included in the above figures are benefits paid in respect of women who have been deserted by their husbands and who have taken proceedings for maintenance orders under the Destitute Persons' Act, 1910. These women must satisfy the main provisions of the Social Security Act, 1938, applicable to widows. At the 31st March, 1948, there were 1,096 such benefits in force, a decrease of 6 from the figure for last year, and there were maintenance orders in operation against 899 defaulting husbands, representing an annual amount of £114,786. On the granting of a benefit the Department undertakes the enforcement of maintenance orders. During the year £60,996 was collected by way of maintenance, representing 53 per cent. of the amount of the orders in force.

The number of widows receiving mother's allowance of £65 decreased from 5,006 as at the 31st March, 1947, to 4,863 as at the 31st March, 1948.

The expenditure for the year for all widows' benefits amounted to £1,770,622, an increase for the year of £241,612. This expenditure included £170,444 in respect of women deserted by their husbands.

It was realized by the Department that some widows are in a difficult financial position in the period immediately following the husband's death, and in order to help such widows the Department now takes the initiative in approaching women whose husbands have just died unless it is known that the widows do not require assistance. If immediate financial assistance is required, an emergency benefit is granted pending finalization of an application for widow's benefit.

ORPHANS' BENEFITS

During the year 58 new benefits were granted. The number of benefits in force decreased from 397 (in respect of 595 children) as at 31st March, 1947, to 370 (in respect of 557 children) as at 31st March, 1948. The expenditure increased from £22,905 for the year ended 31st March, 1947, to £24,187 for the year ended 31st March, 1948. The increase in the rate of benefit from 1st October, 1947, is responsible for the increased expenditure, notwithstanding a decrease in the number of benefits in force.

FAMILY BENEFITS

During the year under review 24,442 new benefits were granted and 369 applications declined. The number of benefits in force increased by 13,118 from 230,021 at 31st March, 1947, to 243,137 at 31st March, 1948, and represented payments in respect of 521,394 children, as against 490,260 children for the previous year.

The expenditure increased from £12,680,778 for the year ended 31st March, 1947, to £13,798,648 for the year ended 31st March, 1948. As would be expected, the majority of new grants were in respect of applications on account of the birth of a first child, but for this year also included benefits granted in respect of children of members of the Armed Forces who were not previously entitled to family benefit.