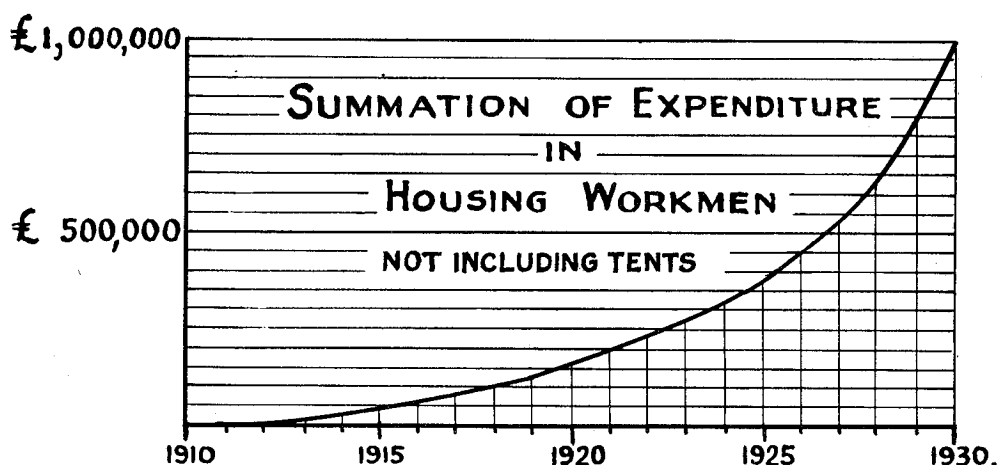


per mile, and on some of these lines it is costing up to £3,000 per mile to provide housing accommodation for the workmen. The graph reproduced below shows the rising cost in this connection. Temporary accommodation, such as tents on works of short duration, is not included.



While no one would desire to return to the standard of accommodation and conditions which prevailed in those days, it will be seen that when the Department is faced with an annual expenditure exceeding £200,000 for the purpose of housing its workmen, it has an item of increased cost which materially adds to the financial burden. This aspect of the problem could with benefit receive the attention of the Select Committee of the House recently set up.

In making the above statement I am not unmindful of the important part played by the Department's railway activities in regard to employment, and I wish to state that at the present moment there are 3,848 men so occupied, and that the amount disbursed in wages during the financial year ended 31st March, 1930, was £750,000, to which, of course, must be added the cost of materials, the overhead charges, consisting of supervision, interest, cost and depreciation of plant, and other items, which increased the total annual disbursement by a further £700,000.

I remarked above the value, from the employment standpoint, of the works under consideration. Taken in conjunction with road-construction and relief works, the second factor emphasized in my opening remarks may be developed more fully. The statistical position is as follows:—

NUMBER OF MEN EMPLOYED ON PUBLIC WORKS ON 20TH SEPTEMBER, 1930.

Railways-construction (charged to Railway Construction					
Vote under control of Minister of Public Works) ..					3,848
Railways-construction (Railways Improvement					
Authorization Account)					435
Roads:—					
Settlement Roads					1,534
Main Highways					2,714
Hydro-electric works					1,447
Irrigation					109
Waihou and Ohinemuri Rivers improvement					67
Buildings					638
General					229
Relief workers					4,939
Public Works Department total					15,960
State Forest Service total					1,089
Total					17,049

It is obvious that any curtailment that Parliament may find it necessary to impose under any one of these items will throw men out of work and add to the already considerable number of the unemployed.

RELIEF WORKS.

The position regarding unemployment has received close attention, and every effort has been made to offer employment to the greatest number of men that it has been possible for the Department with available moneys to employ. At the