

ment of labour caused among those directly engaged in building operations, this decline in the volume of building activity has been the cause of serious disorganization in the industries dependent upon the building trades. The sawmilling industry has been experiencing a period of relative inactivity for some years past. Employment in that industry is shown by official statistics to have decreased each year from 9,643 in the year ended 31st March, 1926, to 7,381 in the year ended 31st March, 1930—a decrease of 23·46 per cent. Although no official data are available as to employment in that industry since March, 1930, one of the effects of the collapse in building operations since that date has been a tremendous increase in unemployment among workers engaged in sawmilling operations.

Employment in the engineering trades during the years immediately prior to 1930 was steadily on the increase. In the motor-engineering trade alone an average of 5,511 workers were employed during the year ended 31st March, 1930. This industry was, however, affected very adversely by the slump in 1930, the total value of motor-vehicles imported having fallen from £4,278,924 in the calendar year 1929 to £2,448,781 in 1930.

In the preceding paragraphs attention has been directed to some of the factors contributing to the abnormal growth of unemployment in New Zealand in recent months. Although, as has been shown, the Dominion is by no means escaping from the effect of the present world-wide economic crisis, the position in this country compares quite favourably with that elsewhere. Although it is extremely difficult to arrive at a fair basis of comparison of the extent of unemployment in different countries, an indication of the relative position is afforded by the following table:—

Country.	Date.	Number of Unemployed.	Population (latest Available Date).	Number Unemployed per 1,000 of Population.
New Zealand .. .. .	End of April, 1931 ..	36,981	1,510,940	24
Great Britain and Northern Ireland	End of April, 1931 ..	1,967,922	41,050,000	48
New South Wales .. ..	End of April, 1931 ..	115,000	2,500,486	46
South Africa .. .. .	End of April, 1931 ..	10,000	1,767,719	6
Canada .. .. .	End of December, 1930	177,000	9,934,000	18
United States .. .. .	End of January, 1931	6,050,000	122,775,046	49
Germany .. .. .	End of March, 1931 ..	4,744,000	64,583,000	73

It will be observed that the incidence of unemployment in New Zealand is considerably lighter than is the case in Great Britain, New South Wales, United States, and Germany. The latest available information as to the total numbers unemployed in Canada is contained in a statement by the Prime Minister of that country, who estimated the number of unemployed in the middle of the Canadian winter at 177,000. At that time the number of unemployed per 1,000 of population in New Zealand was only 7, a figure which compares favourably with the Canadian figure (18 per 1,000).

The comparatively low figure recorded for South Africa (6 per 1,000 of white population) is accounted for partly by the special labour conditions of that country, most of the manual labour being done in normal times by Native labour, which has now been partially replaced by Europeans. Another important factor contributing to the relatively fortunate position of South Africa is the fact that she is the world's greatest gold-producing country, and has consequently escaped, to a large extent, the full severity of the economic depression.

Detailed consideration of the main factors immediately contributing to the present unemployment situation in New Zealand is contained in an appendix to this report.

## 2. REPORT OF THE UNEMPLOYMENT BOARD FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31st MARCH, 1931.

Recognition by the Government of the exigencies of the unemployment situation led to the passing of the Unemployment Act, 1930, and the appointment in November, 1930, of an Unemployment Board as executive authority under the Act. An account of the work of the Unemployment Board up to the end of the financial year is now presented.

### The Unemployment Act, 1930.

The Unemployment Act was placed on the statute-book during the session of 1930, and its provisions became law on the 11th October, 1930. The Act was a direct outcome of the deliberations of the special Committee appointed by the Government on the 17th October, 1928, and the 26th February, 1929, to report on the problems arising out of unemployment, and, in general, it may be said that the Act was framed on the recommendations of this Committee. One of the most important of these recommendations was that, in order to conserve the Unemployment Fund and give the Unemployment Board time in which to organize the necessary administrative machinery, a period of six months should elapse between the coming into operation of the Act and the granting of any benefits from the fund. If it had been possible to carry this recommendation into effect, the Board would have had some time to consider on what lines its policy should be formulated, and also would have been able to organize the machinery, which subsequent experience proved to be essential for the carrying-out of relief measures and for dealing with the various matters arising out of the