

Obviously, the position had become impossible of continuance. The funds at the disposal of the Board were inelastic, while, on the contrary, there appeared not only no prospect of a diminution of unemployment, but even a continuance of ascending numbers. The only course open to the Board lay in the reduction of its expenditure to a figure in consonance with its income. The necessary action was taken subsequent to the 31st March, and is discussed in the appended supplementary report.

Some idea of the extent of the relief work provided through the medium of Scheme No. 5 may be gained from the following figures. An investigation of the refunds of wages made prior to the 31st March, 1931, has been made, and in order to obtain reliable figures on which to base calculations a representative sample of refunds made to twelve large local bodies was taken. Resultant data indicate that the average ration of work amounted to 2.62 days and cost approximately £1 16s. in wages. The average daily wage was just under 13s. 9d.

Applying these figures to the estimated cost of the scheme to the 31st March—viz., £331,560—it will be seen that some 184,300 rations of work were provided, representing an approximate total of 483,000 working-days.

Subsidiary Relief Schemes.

Apart from the operation of its major schemes, the Unemployment Board has granted assistance in respect of several minor but none the less important undertakings calculated to relieve unemployment.

Native Trust Development Work.—One of the first operations of this nature considered by the Board was the offer of the Native Trustee to place a number of the unemployed on suitable developmental work available on various sheep-stations administered by the Native Trust Department. The class of work to be done consisted of clearing scrub from hilly country, afterwards cleaning up the land by fire, and sowing grass-seed. The Board made a grant of £5,000, subsequently increased to £5,500, to meet the cost of equipment and the establishment of camps and suitable transport in connection with this work, and arranged for a loan of £15,000 from the Unemployment Fund for a term of three years, with interest at the rate of 4 per cent., on condition that up to 500 unemployed, preferably single men, were engaged for a period of at least four months. The Aohanga Station, Pongaroa, and Motuweka Station, Porangahau, were selected for this purpose, some 6,000 acres of land requiring to be cleared on the former and 600 acres on the latter. An advance party of men was recruited from the Labour Bureau in Wellington, and despatched with the necessary equipment on the 16th February, 1931, while the main party was sent forward during the following week. Men were drafted also from other bureaux in the Wellington and Wairarapa districts. The majority of the men were placed on the more extensive work at Aohanga, some five miles from the station homestead, which is fifty-six miles from the nearest railway-station. Initial difficulties were successfully overcome, and by the end of March some 250 men were at work on the Aohanga Station and a further thirty men at Motuweka Station. When these areas are cleared and stocked a considerable number of men will be provided with permanent employment.

Assistance to Prospectors.—Early in February a grant of £2,000 was made to the Mines Department, to enable a maximum of 100 married men to be sent out prospecting for gold and other minerals on the lines of the ordinary arrangements for prospecting made by that Department, at the wage usually paid—viz., £1 19s. per week. Parties of from two to three men, under the supervision of an experienced prospector, were to be selected from suitable unemployed men and sent out during March and April. This provided productive work for experienced prospectors, miners, and others who would otherwise have been a charge on the Board's main relief schemes, and, in addition, there was the possibility of a valuable discovery being made, with consequent benefit to the whole community.

Land Drainage.—Waitakaruru Scheme.—A good deal of land-drainage work has been done through the medium of Scheme No. 5, but in general this class of work is not suitable for the employment of rationed labour, and when once commenced cannot be suspended without serious inconvenience and possible loss of the undoubted benefits accruing from the successful completion of such work. Scheme No. 5, by reason of the inability of the Unemployment Board to guarantee any definite period over which the scheme will operate, cannot, therefore, be availed of to any extent by local authorities wishing to undertake land-drainage work on a fairly large scale. Several Drainage Boards have, however, applied to the Board for assistance to enable them to absorb numbers of the unemployed, and, recognizing the value of such work, the Board has offered to consider granting subsidies not exceeding one-third of the total labour-cost of the work.

One of the first applications for assistance of this nature was received from the Hauraki Plains County Council, which submitted proposals concerning a large undertaking known as the Waitakaruru drainage scheme. The Unemployment Board obtained approval for the granting of a subsidy of £3,000 on an estimated total cost of £12,000, provided the maximum number of men was employed and the work was rationed, if possible; the work to be carried out under the supervision of the Chief Drainage Engineer of the Lands and Survey Department. Subsequent advice was received that the work was unsuitable for rationing, as the day labour involved by this procedure would unduly increase the cost. The Board therefore advised that rationing need not be insisted on, but in that case its subsidy could not exceed one-third of the actual cost of labour.

Auckland Waterfront Road.—In November, 1930, the Auckland City Council made application to the Local Government Loans Board for sanction to raise a loan of £29,250 for the construction of a road on the waterfront for the relief of unemployment. The estimated cost of this work was £44,838, and in framing its proposals the Council made allowance for an estimated subsidy of £15,588, being the balance of total cost over the loan for which authority was sought. The Loans Board deferred its consideration until the matter of the subsidy was finalized, and in view of the inability of the Government to grant a subsidy from the special amount set aside for that purpose, for reasons mentioned earlier in this report, application for a subsidy was made to the Unemployment Board. After consideration, the Board recommended that this work be subsidized on a pound-for-pound basis on