

*Work involved in amending Rules of Scheme.*—During the fortnight's cessation the Board did not meet, but individual members devoted at least three days of each week to co-operating with the local committees in their own districts, particularly in regard to assisting in the elimination of those applicants not eligible for relief under the Board's schemes.

Up to this time, local committees and Certifying Officers had done excellent work in arranging employment for the ever-increasing numbers of registered unemployed. With the tightening-up of the rules, and particularly the introduction of the new registration system, a very large amount of extra work was thrown on officers of the Labour Department and Post Office, particularly in the more important centres. While the various local committees responded excellently to the extra demands made on them, it was the Employment Bureaux officers, who are also Certifying Officers under the Board's schemes, who were required to re-register and investigate the claims of nearly forty thousand men. Other committee members did valuable work, but the Certifying Officers, being the representatives of the Board on their respective committees, have the additional responsibility of exercising a close supervision over the expenditure of the Unemployment Board's funds. The Board wishes to acknowledge and express its deep appreciation of the manner in which these officers have carried out their duties in handling such a large number of men and at the same time complying with the requirements of the Board.

The excellent manner in which these duties have been performed is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that there has been a surprising lack of complaint from the unemployed themselves. No doubt the continual filling-in of forms and complying with rules and regulations became very irksome to the men concerned, but the work was done tactfully and with all possible despatch. No little credit for this is due to the men, who appear to have realized that in assisting the Board to place its schemes on a basis compatible with its available funds they were helping themselves and conserving the Unemployment Fund so that the greatest benefit would be conferred on the greatest number eligible for relief and genuinely in need of it. Any trouble at this or any other time would have seriously hampered the Board's activities. The absence of any such trouble or delay in the operation of its schemes has therefore been a very pleasing feature of the Board's activities during the strenuous time of the last few months.

Many requests for guidance in determining eligibility for relief under the amended rules were made by local committees and Certifying Officers, and some of the unemployed themselves sought rulings on their treatment under these rules. Gradually, however, the fact that the Board was doing its very best under difficult circumstances became generally realized. An indication of the volume of correspondence dealt with after the 1st April may be gained from the fact that the charges for postage and telegrams since that date have exceeded £600, as compared with approximately £400 for the four preceding months. At times the inward and outward mail, including letters, telegrams, circulars, &c., averaged over one thousand per day. Many thousands of vouchers for payment of subsidies and refund of wages have been dealt with during the last six months, and a considerable staff is engaged on this portion of the work alone.

*Criticism of Work done through Scheme*—Some criticism has been levelled at the Board concerning the so-called restrictions imposed on the class of work it has authorized to be done through Scheme No. 5 by local bodies. It is claimed in many quarters that the work which has so far been done is useless and uneconomic, and therefore a waste of public moneys, apart from the fact that the provision of such work has put some money into the pockets of the unemployed.

Work not scheduled for this or next year may not be of immediate economic value, but that does not mean it is necessarily useless. If local bodies have exercised a wise discretion in the selection of relief work, such work will be of material value in the future, and the results will undoubtedly be reflected in reduced expenditure by the local bodies in later years, thus benefiting the ratepayers and citizens generally. Had local bodies been able to carry out maintenance and other ordinary work at the cost of the Unemployment Board, the local bodies could have discharged their permanent employees and the Board would have been accepting practically the full responsibility for all local-body work in the Dominion, and would not have found the extra work required for the legitimate unemployed.

That the work carried out by local bodies under Scheme No. 5 has been appreciated is seen by the following letter received from the President (Mr. Thomas Jackson) of the Municipal Association of New Zealand:—

"I would like to express my own and the executive's appreciation of the work your Board has done in evolving the various schemes for the relief of unemployment.

"I would particularly stress the importance to local bodies generally of your Board's No. 5 Scheme, which I consider to have been the most efficient scheme which has so far been evolved, in so far as it enabled local bodies to place large numbers of unemployed people at work on useful and permanent works within easy reach of their own homes.

"I realize that your Board has been confronted with numerous difficulties. The urgency of the necessity for giving relief made it imperative that such schemes as were evolved should be brought into existence with as little delay as possible, and I consider that the rapidity with which your various schemes have been brought into operation reflects the greatest credit upon your Board, and that the operation of the schemes have conferred great benefits upon the various local authorities in addition to the relief and assistance they have afforded to the unemployed workers."

*Check on Expenditure.*—Work on Scheme No. 5 was resumed on the 27th April, 1931, and the Board reassembled on the following day. Under the amended rules Certifying Officers were required to send in their estimates of men to be employed and wages to be paid by the local bodies two weeks in advance. So close a check on the weekly expenditure was required that they were instructed that