

Much of Scheme 5 work has been of limited value ; but special investigation has shown that under Scheme 5 some ten thousand men are now engaged in work of a definitely productive nature, such as land drainage and improvement.

The Unemployment Board has managed to live within its income. This has been achieved only by rigid economy, necessary owing to the limited funds at its disposal ; but there are many deserving citizens whom the Board has been unable to assist at all. On the whole, and in the face of real difficulties, the Unemployment Board has to its credit a fine record of achievement.

Scheme 4A will continue, and as many men as farmers are prepared to take will be made available under this scheme if satisfactory arrangements can be entered into with the farmers. When a farmer has no accommodation available for a man, and cannot provide it, arrangements will be made to provide a hut, or materials to erect one.

Although the total of registered unemployed has fallen in the past five months, there is one group in which the numbers have not fallen, and that is the married men in cities. While the total of single men registered as unemployed in the four main cities has fallen from nine thousand to seven thousand—a drop of 23 per cent.—the number of unemployed married men in the cities was eleven thousand five hundred in October, and is still eleven thousand two hundred in March—a negligible drop of 2 per cent. This brings me to refer to the *first* measure which we propose for the further relief of married men.

We turn our attention to the land, and propose a scheme of rural allotments. Under this new plan, sections of from 5 to 10 acres will be acquired by any form of tenure which is most suitable to the case, and a cottage of the public-works type will be erected thereon. The allotments will be distributed throughout rural districts. The occupant of the section will work some of the time for himself on his place in providing his own sustenance, and part of the time for a nearby farmer or any one in the locality who can employ him. It is recognized that relief workers who are thus moved out will not immediately be able to earn an independent livelihood. Some part of the present relief allowance must therefore be continued. Again, there are many cases where a landowner could make available to a worker a portion of his land, and the occupant could work in the same way—that is to say, part of the time on his allotment, and part for farmers in the district.

The Government appeals to all landowners and farmers to help in this time of stress. If they will respond—and I am sure they will—an impetus will be given to production ; men will be found employment ; farmers will have labour ; and at least some of the men, we hope, will later become permanent settlers.

As typical of what can be done, and something that has been done, we can picture a farmer agreeing to take a relief worker and his family on to his place, with a cottage provided ; the farmer setting aside a few acres and providing a cow or two, pigs, and such farm-products as he can, while the relief worker agrees to work on stated terms on the farm.

This matter of placing unemployed on rural allotments has been carefully considered. We are well aware of its difficulties and of its limitations ; it is not wholly a land-settlement scheme, but rather an emergency measure to move some thousands of persons into an environment with opportunities for the individual. At the very least it will provide a shelter until the storm has passed over, and is certainly preferable to keeping families in congested areas with little hope or opportunity.

Transport is amongst the incidental problems raised by a scheme of this character. The Railways Board have been consulted, and I am pleased to say that they have agreed to cut charges and to co-operate in a helpful way.

The Government have agreed to recommend Parliament to provide a fund in the nature of capital expenditure to help to finance this scheme.

With this plan—to which, I may say, I attach the greatest importance—I shall deal more fully when I speak on the Bill. Meanwhile, I refer to some other work that is in hand.

*Land-drainage* offers a very valuable addition to the works to be undertaken. There are many thousands of acres of good land which only require drainage, its carrying-capacity being restricted owing to its waterlogged condition. Drainage will enable this land to be made completely productive, and provide for greatly increased production and ultimately for closer settlement.

*Tidal-flat Reclamation* also offers scope for considerable development. There may be legal difficulties in this matter, but these will be overcome by legislation. Some works are in hand, and when completed will be immediately made available to those requiring small farms.

*Reclamation of Virgin Land.*—Proposals are being finalized embracing development of Crown lands by suitable men.

*Proposals for Land-settlement*, not directly undertaken by the Government, will be sympathetically considered and encouraged.

*Roadwork*, particularly metalling of backblock roads, will enable us to give employment to a considerable number of men in providing all-weather access, which settlers so badly need.

*Gold-prospecting.*—The considerable increase in the value of gold will enable many areas of gold-bearing country, which could not be worked at a profit at the old price of gold, to be now worked and give a reasonable return. After consultation with the Minister of Mines, I am pleased to say provision is being made for the services of supervisors additional to those already available. I look forward to a great expansion in this connection.

Apart from these ventures along remedial lines, some further changes are being made in connection with relief administration.

Scheme 5 has in the past been used almost exclusively for the employment of men in the towns and cities. A commencement has already been made to apply this scheme to country work, with the difference that the work is continuous and there are no stand-down periods. It is essential that work in the country should be carried on continuously. The policy is to direct labour into rural districts.