

NUMBERS OF UNEMPLOYED.

Table I in the Appendix to this report shows the number of applicants for work remaining on the registers of employment bureaux at the end of each week during the period under review, registrations at urban areas being shown separately. As explained in the Board's report for 1932, these figures include men engaged on relief work through Scheme No. 5, the bulk of such work representing only part-time relief, although during the last twelve months increasing numbers of men have been put on to full-time work through the medium of this scheme. Reference to this aspect of unemployment relief will be found in a later paragraph, but it would be as well to explain here that, although such full-time employment bears a close resemblance to other types of relief work where the men are removed from the register and treated as placements, it has not been found practicable to effect payment of relief moneys to the majority of gold-prospectors, men doing developmental work on private properties or Crown lands, &c., without allocating the necessary funds through the nominal employing authorities. This being so, it is imperative to retain the men on the register under the existing system, and, indeed, if any other source were followed, the Board would lose the benefit of its continuous check on eligibility, with consequent danger of incurring needless expenditure.

A general conspectus of unemployment registrations since the beginning of 1930 appears in the following table :—

| | | | | 1930. | 1931. | 1932. | 1933. |
|---------------|----|----|----|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| Last week in— | | | | | | | |
| January | .. | .. | .. | 2,572 | 16,607 | 45,654 | 51,698 |
| February | .. | .. | .. | 2,520 | 27,662 | 44,107 | 49,971 |
| March | .. | .. | .. | 3,130 | 38,028 | 45,383 | 51,035 |
| April | .. | .. | .. | 3,379 | 36,981 | 50,093 | 53,171 |
| May | .. | .. | .. | 5,084 | 42,523 | 53,543 | 55,477 |
| June | .. | .. | .. | 5,491 | 45,264 | 54,342 | 56,563 |
| July | .. | .. | .. | 5,360 | 47,772 | 55,837 | 57,169 |
| August | .. | .. | .. | 5,463 | 50,033 | 56,332 | 56,750 |
| September | .. | .. | .. | 6,025 | 51,375 | 55,728 | 56,173 |
| October | .. | .. | .. | 6,018 | 50,284 | 54,549 | .. |
| November | .. | .. | .. | 7,402 | 47,535 | 52,477 | .. |
| December | .. | .. | .. | 11,371* | 45,140 | 52,523 | .. |

* This number recorded just prior to Christmas. In the following week the figure dropped to 7,596, owing to the placing of a considerable number of men on a special temporary scheme.

These figures show month by month the numbers actually on the register, whether receiving relief or not, and have no connection with the total number of recipients of relief from the Unemployment Fund. Other detailed tables in the Appendix dissect these figures to show registered unemployed receiving relief as distinct from applicants who are ineligible or unplaced.

As a barometer of the unemployment situation in New Zealand over an extensive period, these registration figures are extremely interesting. They depict the gradual rise in the numbers of workless during 1930, when the economic depression was advancing on the Dominion; next, the sudden increase in the early part of 1931 with the figures ever rising to an unprecedented and unforeseen peak of over 56,000 at the end of the winter of 1932. This period of the year has proved, during the last three years, to be the most serious for those seeking employment.

At the end of 1932, when the Board's second annual report was prepared, it was impossible to predict the position for the ensuing twelve months. Now that the year 1933 is drawing to its close it is apparent, however, that while the numbers of registered unemployed were considerably larger during its first six months than in the corresponding period of 1932 (approximately six thousand more at the end of the months of January, February, and March respectively), this position has not remained constant, and that the total registered unemployed at the peak period is very little higher than it was a year ago.

The continued policy of the Board, however, in placing increasing numbers of unemployed men on full-time work in recognized trades, or other channels most calculated to benefit the Dominion and bring some definite return to the taxpayers as a whole, tends to detract from the statistical value of the numbers of *registered* unemployed as a true index. This creates a factor operating against any apparent ground for expectation either of reduced taxation or of extra monetary benefits to relief workers.

Reference to Table II in the Appendix will show the estimated numbers of males who were, in one way or another, a charge on the Unemployment Fund at the end of successive four-weekly periods since 1st October, 1932. Allowing for a certain amount of abuse by employers (actual or prospective) of the benefits offered by the Board in its search for suitable channels of work, it may be assumed that the majority of these men would be unemployed but for the existence of the Unemployment Fund or other Government measures for alleviating unemployment.