

**Child-welfare.**

Recent legislation has considerably widened the scope of the social work as carried out by the Child Welfare Branch of the Education Department, necessitating the employment of additional Welfare Officers and better provision in institutions for the classification of the inmates. Two new institutions for girls were established, at Christchurch and Timaru.

**UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF.****Unemployment relief.**

To cure unemployment some far-reaching changes in our economic conditions must be brought about, and I have already outlined the Government's proposals in this connection. In the meantime, recognizing the urgency of the need of many of our unfortunate citizens, the Government, on assuming office, gave their immediate attention to the question of unemployment relief.

**Relief works.**

The Act passed during the first short session of the new Parliament increased some of the votes granted in the last Appropriation Act in order that additional relief works could be put in hand without delay. At the same time authority was obtained for the payment of £100,000 additional subsidies to local authorities for relief works in the cities and towns.

Instructions were also issued to the various labour-employing Departments, such as the Public Works, Post and Telegraph, and Forestry, to provide work for as many men as possible, and I am pleased to say that these efforts have done much to relieve the position.

**Rates of wages.**

Although it meant considerable increase in the cost to the State, the Government had no hesitation in increasing the standard rates of pay for relief workers from 9s. and 12s. per day to 14s. per day. The lower rates fixed by the last Administration were considered to be inadequate under present-day conditions, and I feel sure that it is not the wish of the taxpayers that the troubles of these people, on whom has fallen the brunt of our economic misfortunes, should be increased by niggardly rates of pay on relief works put in hand by the State. The special relief works are mostly on roads, highways, and forestry. The expenditure last year on such works totalled £729,034, in addition to which there remained commitments as at the 31st March last amounting to £45,223. Subsidies to local authorities paid over amounted to £68,567, and at the end of the year there were also commitments amounting to £36,794. The total cost to the State of unemployment relief last year was thus £879,618, which is an indication of the Government's efforts to assist in alleviating distress through unemployment.

**State expenditure.****Subsidies to local authorities for relief works.**

The local authorities, particularly in the cities, are also alive to their responsibilities in the matter, and during last year unemployment loans amounting to £102,533 were sanctioned by the Local Government Loans Board. The expenditure on wages and transport in connection with approved works put in hand by local authorities is subsidized by the State, firstly to encourage the undertaking of relief works, and secondly to reimburse the local authorities for the additional expense incurred in employing labour unaccustomed, in many cases, to manual work. The money, however, is in all cases expended on useful works, which when completed become assets of the local authority concerned. Admittedly, some local authorities find difficulty in providing useful works on which a relatively high proportion of the cost is for labour, but, even so, it is clearly inequitable that the State should be called upon to subsidize the cost of materials used on such works in cities and boroughs, as has been suggested in some quarters.

**Unemployment insurance.**

I may add that I have arranged for the question of unemployment insurance to be fully investigated, and I hope the outcome will enable me to present next session a matured scheme to deal with the problem.

**EARTHQUAKE DISASTER.****Earthquake disaster.**

I would like next to refer to the serious earthquake that occurred on 17th June last, resulting, I regret to say, in loss of life and heavy material damage.

**Immediate relief to sufferers.**

As soon as the extent of the distress and damage was realized, the Government at once got into touch with the authorities at the centres affected with a view to providing transport and other facilities for refugees. Immediate steps were taken