

CAMP SCHEMES.

Early in September, 1931, the problem of finding sufficient useful work to occupy the large numbers of unemployed men in the cities and larger towns was becoming acute. The Board, after careful deliberation, therefore embarked on a new policy of transferring groups of single men to useful works in rural districts. It was decided, first of all, to experiment with the transfer of up to a thousand single men from the larger centres; and, as the setting-up of camps was a necessary factor in such a scheme, the co-operation was obtained of the Public Works Department, which had the required organization and equipment readily available.

The work selected for the initial experiment was the improvement of roads, mostly secondary highways, suitable work in this direction being available through the medium of the Main Highways Board, which at that time was in a position also to bear a proportion of the cost. The Main Highways Board agreed to meet the cost of establishing the camps and of providing utensils and food, the Unemployment Board paying the men according to a contract scale, laid down on the basis of individual effort, and averaging 10s. per man per week.

The cost of transporting the men to camp was met by the Unemployment Board, which imposed a safeguarding condition that they must remain in camp at least a month or, if they left without good reason or were dismissed for misconduct within that time, that they must refund the cost of their fares. Failure to comply cancelled eligibility for further relief work under any scheme.

At that time, owing to pressure on the Board's funds, the measure of relief available under Scheme 5 to single men in the cities and towns was restricted, and those entering camp undoubtedly bettered their condition in that they were assured of good food and accommodation with some cash payment equal to if not greater than funds permitted their earning on Scheme 5.

Very little time was lost in establishing the camps in districts ranging from North Auckland to Southland; and during October an average of 840 single men were engaged on the scheme, which was designated 6A.

An opportunity of setting up camps for unemployed single men on similar conditions was offered to other Departments of State, to local bodies and others, and was accepted in certain instances, this division of the scheme being known as 6B.

Later the scope of the Camp Scheme was extended, under the heading 6C, to provide for the undertaking of land-improvement, especially land-drainage and other classes of developmental work such as sand-dune reclamation, clearing willows from streams, irrigation, afforestation, and in one special area the cutting-back of hawthorn hedges to prevent the spread of fire-blight. Camps were to be established by the most convenient method and on the best possible terms so far as expenditure from the Unemployment Fund was concerned. The men placed therein were not necessarily restricted to unmarried men.

The original scheme arranged with the co-operation of the Main Highways Board lasted six months, after which the Main Highways Board reported that its funds could no longer bear the charges previously met from that source. The Unemployment Board's contribution was, therefore, raised in April, 1931, to £1 1s. per man per week, and was further increased the following month to a maximum of £1 10s. per man per week until the work already in hand was completed.

This maximum was also applied to camps established under Scheme 6C, except in very special circumstances where the value to the community of the work undertaken was likely to warrant an exception being made. Since April, 1932, only those works having a definite value to the community have been put in operation by means of relief labour in camps, and usually some contribution has been required from the local authority or, in the case of private properties, from the owners.

The appended table shows the approximate numbers of men engaged at the end of each month on work under the various camp schemes from their inception till September, 1932:—

Month.	Main Highways Board and Public Works Camps.		Other Camps.	Total Number of Men.
	Highways and Roads.	Land-development, &c.		
1931.				
September	650	10	90	750
October	820	90	110	1,020
November	875	85	20	980
December	780	80	40	900
1932.				
January	855	130	50	1,035
February	900	275	50	1,225
March	930	355	60	1,345
April	965	495	40	1,500
May	955	735	50	1,740
June	1,055	870	540	2,465
July	1,255	1,175	850	3,280
August	1,250	1,350	790	3,390
September	1,125	1,590	950	3,665

The increase during recent months in the number of men under the first heading is accounted for by special work put in hand by relief labour for the improvement of backblocks roads. It will be noted that the numbers in "other camps" since May, 1932, have risen considerably; this is principally on account of camps established by the State Forest Service.