

UNEMPLOYMENT.

New industries.

Progress towards full employment must be made through the extension of our secondary industries and development of new industries and services. To this end the Minister of Industries and Commerce has set up a Bureau of Industry to investigate and develop new industries, and provision for financial assistance for this purpose has already been made.

Additional Christmas payments.

In the interim period the first essential was to remove the immediate distress prevailing throughout the Dominion, and shortly after assumption of office £270,000 was distributed to the unemployed to enable them to enjoy some pleasure during the Christmas period.

Two months later, on 2nd March, all relief rates were reviewed, the unemployed in the provincial towns being placed on the same basis as those in the cities.

Increased rates of pay.

On 1st June, after a comprehensive review of conditions and finances, it was decided to increase all rates of pay, the increases varying from 4s. per week in the case of single men up to 19s. 6d. per week for married men with large families. The sustenance rates were also increased by from 3s. to 13s. per week.

Conditions were improved and income scales raised. The increases as compared with last year involved £800,000. These were inevitably temporary measures.

The difficulties of the task are recognized, but on its successful achievement depends the health and happiness of our people. It is realized that the reorganization of the industrial activities of the whole community and the obtaining of a proper balance between industries are matters requiring sustained effort.

Every one must recognize that under any rational economic order every person willing to work is entitled to the things necessary for a reasonable standard of living. If science, power, and the machine displace human labour, then social economic and financial procedure must be adjusted to the new conditions.

Promotion of full time employment.

While engaged in these plans, the Government is promoting as much full-time employment as possible. One of the means adopted to this end is the acceleration of a sound Public Works policy under which a large number of men are engaged in creating assets of national benefit. I will have more to say in regard to Public Works presently. Local bodies, also, recognize their responsibilities to the people within their areas and generally, with the aid of subsidies from the Employment Fund, are making efforts to assist the Government by expanding their programmes of work.

Gold prospecting.

The resources of the Fund are also being used to promote full-time work in other directions. One such avenue is the gold-prospecting schemes which have provided considerable employment, and in some districts particularly the results obtained have been distinctly encouraging. The policy in this connection is now being directed more towards the organization of large parties to explore thoroughly likely areas for gold-bearing reefs with a view to the opening-up of new fields and the restoration of the industry on a more permanent basis.

Placement Scheme.

A general activity of the Labour Department that has proved very successful in obtaining full-time work for unemployed is what is known as the Placement Scheme. In the past the Department has operated small labour exchanges, but recently these activities have been entirely reorganized and plans drawn up to cover fully the employment field.

During the ten weeks of effective life of the new plan, no less than 1,462 men have been placed in permanent employment and 1,185 in temporary positions.

Employment Fund.

Concerning the finances of the Employment Fund: reference to the Public Accounts will show that the total amount available last financial year was £5,289,563, made up of—

	£
Balance carried forward	1,332,946
Revenue from taxation	3,920,026
Interest and other miscellaneous receipts	36,591