

ADMINISTRATION.

The Unemployment Board was abolished on 31st May, 1936, and the administrative activities relating to the assessment, collection, and recovery of employment-tax were transferred to the Land and Income Tax Department, while the administration of the measures dealing with the promotion of employment and assistance to unemployed persons remained with the Labour Department. District offices or employment bureaux have been established in all the main centres. Where there is no permanent Labour Department representative, the local post-office (if the Postmaster is a permanent official and the establishment of a bureau is warranted) has continued to act as an employment bureau with an independent register, the Postmaster acting as certifying officer for the purpose of certifying payments from the Employment Promotion Fund. Unemployment Relief Committees have been disbanded. An exception is the case of the Women's Employment Committees, which still continue to function. Statutory provision is contained in the Employment Promotion Act, 1936, for the appointment of committees to assist in the distribution of relief, but it is unlikely that any will be constituted. Direct administration by the Department has been the keynote of control of relief and employment-promotion activities, and this policy has been carried, in a number of instances, to the point of relieving the Post and Telegraph Department of the administration by setting up departmental offices. Services previously rendered by various Government Departments, which in the early depression years had been enjoined to render necessary assistance without charge, were taken over by the Labour Department. A strengthening of staff has been effected with a more detailed system of administration for the purpose of undertaking a more intensive check to provide against imposition on the Fund. The reorganization of administration on a permanent basis, as distinct from the emergency atmosphere in which unemployment relief was first introduced and continued, has been steadily proceeded with. New measures allied with the study of the general and industrial position have been undertaken in order to promote employment and effect rehabilitation of the unemployed.

LEGISLATION.

The Employment Promotion Act, 1936, came into force on the 1st June, 1936. It consolidated and concentrated in one Act the provisions dealing with assistance to persons out of employment and the promotion of additional employment, which were previously scattered through the Unemployment Act, 1930, the Amendment Acts of 1931, 1932, and 1934, and sundry Finance Acts. Statutory form was also given to certain administrative details previously dealt with by regulation, and provision was made to correct certain anomalies and to ensure more efficient administration.

The principal legislative changes were as follows :—

ABOLITION OF THE UNEMPLOYMENT BOARD.

The Unemployment Board was abolished and the administration of the Employment Promotion Act vested in the Department of Labour (under the control of the Minister of Labour). For this purpose the Secretary of Labour was charged with most of the functions previously exercised by the Commissioner of Unemployment, except that the Commissioner of Taxes assumed control of the assessment and collection of employment-tax as if it were income-tax.

CONTROL OF EXPENDITURE.

All expenditure from the Employment Promotion Fund has been made subject to an approval of the Minister of Labour, with the concurrence of the Minister of Finance.

EXEMPTION OF EMPLOYMENT-TAX FOR INCOME-TAX.

The previously existing special exemption for income-tax purposes of amounts paid as unemployment-tax has not been provided for in the present Act.

APPORTIONMENT OF INCOME.

Where income received in advance is apportioned over one or more years by the Commissioner of Taxes for income-tax purposes, that apportionment now automatically becomes operative for employment-tax.

DEFAULT ASSESSMENTS.

Power was given previously to make default assessments on persons who failed to make declarations of income or made faulty ones, but the complementary power to fix a date by which objection to the default assessment could be lodged was omitted. The necessary power has now been given, and the Commissioner of Taxes may accept, if he thinks fit, objections made after the expiration of the time allowed.

COSTS OF ADMINISTRATION.

This expenditure was previously charged direct against the Fund. The new Act makes such expenses a charge on the Consolidated Fund in the first place, and such proportion of those expenses as the Minister of Labour (with the approval of the Minister of Finance) shall direct may be recouped to the Consolidated Fund from the Employment Promotion Fund.