

in the world as it is known to-day to conceive a state of affairs in which every man at every time and in every place is employed at work for which he has been trained. It would appear that there will always be unemployment as long as our economic system is subject to change and growth, and this is especially so in New Zealand where so many of the industries are of a seasonal nature.

To form an adequate appreciation of the unemployment position as it now exists, it is necessary first to ascertain what has been the normal amount of unemployment in predepression years, and then to analyse the present registration figures in order to obtain a basis of comparison between them and the unemployment position of the years prior to 1930.

For the purpose of the first objective recourse is necessary to the Census returns. These returns taken from time to time have revealed that the number without a contract of employment on the night of the Census ranged between 15,000 in 1896 to slightly below 6,000 in 1916: 1916 was the war period when unemployment would no doubt be at its lowest point. In 1926 the Census revealed that there were 10,700 male wage-earners without a contract of employment. These figures were recorded in a period when the building industry was booming, the expenditure on buildings in 1926 being a record for New Zealand. No Census was taken in 1931. For the years covered by the Census return it is thus revealed that the average number of unemployed male wage-earners was 4.5 per cent. To-day there are 460,000 males between the ages of twenty and sixty-five liable for payment of the levy. These, of course, are not all wage-earners, but if only half of them are regarded as wage-earners and the average percentage of unemployed is taken as that revealed by the Census returns, then the normal number of persons without contract of employment (arising mainly from the seasonal nature of our industries) would apparently be not less than 10,000.

As regards an analysis of the present registration figures, it is necessary at this point to refer to the provisions of section 35 of the Employment Promotion Act, 1936. When that Act was placed on the statute-book power, which did not previously exist, was taken in section 35 to provide for assistance not only to persons out of employment, but also to persons otherwise in need of assistance. Under this provision it became possible to widen the original test of eligibility for relief benefits which required that an applicant therefor should be involuntarily unemployed, able and willing to work, and available for work, and to accept as eligible for those benefits men who were not available for work on account of sickness or other incapacity. The registration figures as at 28th August, 1937, relative to persons in receipt of sustenance (relief benefit without work in return) show that 19,973 men were in receipt of that form of relief on the date named. Of this number 2,895 single men and 5,604 married men were unable, for health reasons, to accept employment. Those figures comprised 181 single men and 373 married men reported as temporarily sick, and 2,714 single men and 5,231 married men reported as more or less continuously unable, on account of sickness or other infirmity, to accept employment. Thus, of the total sustenance-recipients to the number of 19,973 there were 8,499 persons who temporarily or continuously were sick or infirm.

For easier reference the figures at 28th August as published by the Department and the above analysis are set out as follows:—

1. Registered but not eligible or not placed on relief	2,371	1. Registered but not eligible or not placed on relief	2,371
2. Receiving rationed work relief under Scheme No. 5.. .. .	4,979	2. Receiving rationed work relief under Scheme No. 5.. .. .	4,979
3. Receiving sustenance without work	19,973	3. Receiving sustenance without work—	
4. Receiving full - time employment wholly or partly paid from the Employment Promotion Fund	9,993	(a) Unemployed	11,474
		(b) Physically or otherwise unemployable	8,499
		4. Receiving full - time employment wholly or partly paid from the Employment Promotion Fund	9,993
	37,316		37,316

The existence of adequate statutory provision in the Employment Promotion Act in the matter of dealing with benefits to persons incapacitated is sufficiently revealed in the foregoing data. The handling of the cases of the 8,499 unfit persons required no alteration in the administrative or internal machinery of the Department, and the experience gained should prove of considerable value to the Government in its administration of this form of social benefit under a general scheme relating to national health and unemployment.

With final reference to the subject of an analysis of the unemployment registrations, it should be observed that the quoted figures of unfit men have been taken from careful estimates which have been made with a view to determining the proportion of those fit for ordinary work, for light work, and those who, for all practical purposes, should be regarded as unfit, for various reasons, for any work under prevailing conditions of employment. The only method of obtaining accurate and detailed information as to present or possible future employability, &c., is by meticulous consideration of all the circumstances of each case. This procedure would necessitate an unhurried personal interview with each individual, with subsequent verification of statements and claims in order to detect intentional or unintentional inaccuracy, and preceded or followed by a searching medical examination.

A thorough analysis on the lines indicated above is hardly practicable where large numbers are concerned, but an attempt is being made to evolve a practical but modified plan which would probably include personal interviews by specially selected departmental officers who would invite each individual to supply information along lines calculated to afford a reliable opinion, not only in regard to the