

applicant's degree of employability or unemployability at that time, but as to any reasonable course of training or treatment considered likely to render him again employable. Even this modified programme would entail a great deal of effort, time, and cost, but would be an undoubted advance in the direction of measuring the problem and, it is hoped, be the means of improving the future employment prospects of a substantial number of people who for a considerable period have been wholly or mainly dependent upon relief assistance. It is confidently felt that some plan on the above basis will be found practicable, although, in view of the importance of the question, examination of and decision in regard to the problem must be unhurried.

EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION FUND.

The particulars as to receipts and payments for the year ended 31st March, 1937, are contained in the audited statement as per Table V of the Appendices hereto, while a summarized comparison of the figures for last year with those of previous years is set out in Table I.

The revenue received into the Fund for the year ended 31st March, 1937, totalling £4,224,965, exceeded that for the previous year by £304,939. As stated earlier in the report, the increased wages-tax receipts point to a rise of £12,000,000 in salaries and wages, and additional amounts provided by the charge on "other income" indicates an increase of over £8,700,000 in this class of income.

Payments during the year ended 31st March, 1937, aggregated £4,414,011, and showed a decrease of £468,841 as compared with the preceding year.

The financial year closed with a cash balance of £253,245.

The position of the Fund as at 31st March, 1937, was thus a satisfactory one. The revenue for the year 1937-38 is expected to reflect the improvement in the national income, and the yield from employment-tax is estimated at £5,180,000.

It is appropriate to refer here to the measures which have been taken and which are projected in the matter of promotion of employment. Although the subject is dealt with more fully in another part of this report, the expenditure necessary to give effect to the statutory provisions in this behalf (section 35 (a) and (b) of the Employment Promotion Act, 1936) may, and often does, exceed what would be required if the only statutory objective was to make relief payments to persons out of employment or otherwise in need of assistance.

The improving position of the Fund will also, no doubt, be taken into account when proposals now under consideration are brought to finality in the matter of the national superannuation health and unemployment scheme. Consideration will, it is expected, be given to the possibility of any surplus moneys in the Employment Promotion Fund forming the nucleus of the funds necessary to bringing those proposals into operation.

REVIEW OF BENEFITS TO UNEMPLOYED.

It is necessary to cover a period of two years to give a complete record of increases in rates of relief pay and of other measures for the amelioration of the conditions affecting relief-recipients. For the purpose of conveying an adequate presentation of what improvements have been effected comparative tables have in certain cases been included in the following review:—

CHRISTMAS RELIEF, 1935-36.

The extra relief usually given at the Christmas and New Year holiday periods was increased by 150 per cent. over and above the provisions made in this direction in previous years. The amount expended on the provision of the Christmas relief in 1934 was £44,240, as compared with £127,186 in 1935. Due to the considerable increase in the scale of relief payments during 1936, the bonus for that year was disbursed on the basis of £1 for single men and £2 for married men, and the total amount expended thereon was £56,981.

The scope of the qualification for the bonus in 1936 was somewhat widened in order to permit all relief workers who were employed on a part-time basis for a period of one week only—namely, the week ended 5th December—to receive the bonus. Previously a stipulation for participation in the bonus was that the relief recipient was required to be in receipt of relief for a period of not less than thirteen weeks during the preceding twelve months.

RELIEF PAYMENTS.

The relief rates of pay have been considerably increased over the past two years, the first review taking place as from 2nd March, 1936, when all districts were placed on an equal footing with the four main centres, in which the relief rates had previously been higher. This resulted in an increase of from 4s. 6d. to 5s. per week for single men and 6s. per week for married men in the country districts, and an increase of from 2s. to 3s. per week for single men and 3s. per week for married men in the secondary towns. The sum of £175,000 per annum was involved in this increase.

Then, as from 1st June, 1936, Scheme No. 5 and sustenance-rates were further increased in all districts. A further amount of £590,000 per annum was required to meet this improvement. The sustenance-rates were then again raised as from 30th November, 1936, by 3s. per week for single men and 6s. per week for married men. The difference between the sustenance and Scheme No. 5 rates, as from that date, has been reduced to 1s. per week for single men and 3s. 6d. per week for married men.