

## STATE PLACEMENT SERVICE.

Twelve months of exceptional difficulty, and only partial success, in meeting the requirements of a wartime labour market have to be recorded in reporting on the activities of the State Placement Service during the year ended 31st March, 1941.

Last year's report presaged more significant adjustments in the manning of industry as the war continued, and it is the development of these adjustments which has been at the root of most of the problems facing the Service in the period reviewed. The drain of man-power—the most physically fit and suitable industrially—into the armed forces and into wartime employment has been such as to deplete greatly the labour force available for peace-time industrial requirements. Notwithstanding this depletion, industries more directly subserving New Zealand's war effort—most notably the engineering, clothing, and footwear ones—have remained unsupplied with much of the skilled male and female labour which they could absorb. Given a maintained export market for the Dominion, these are tendencies which will inevitably be reinforced during the next twelve months and for as long as the war continues and which will also tend to be accompanied by increasing strain on the man-power in industry. If, however, further substantial lowering of exportable surpluses should unfortunately occur, a different set of factors in considering the level of industrial activity and hence the demand for labour must be consulted, and a very different conclusion as to future employment trends may be invited. To examine the implications of such an hypothesis is not, however, a task which comes within the scope of this report.

In attempting to bridge the gap between labour supply and demand, employers have perforce called to a much greater extent than ordinarily on youth and female labour and upon elderly and semi-fit male labour generally which in normal times would not be acceptable. The extent to which these trends have been observed is shown by the figures relating to enrolments, placements, and vacancies appearing hereafter, and by similar statistics relating to the juvenile-labour market appearing in the report on the activities of the Government Youth Centres.

The Placement Service, as far as it has been enabled, has assisted industry to avail itself of these labour reserves. It has also assisted in economizing the Dominion's labour-supply by accurate classification and inter-district placement of Placement Service enrolees as well as by co-operation with the Labour Department in emergency schemes for the specialized training and placement of certain types of workers.

The reserves of female and elderly labour above referred to have now been called upon to the extent that Placement Service enrolments of these types of worker have fallen almost entirely away. Considering the obligation of all unemployment beneficiaries to keep current their enrolments with the Placement Service, this is significant of the general shortage of labour in industry. The demand for juvenile labour has also proved so great as to occasion concern among educationalists and vocational-guidance workers at the resultant efflux of juveniles from schools.

If there remains any considerable reserve of unused labour in the Dominion, it must be that which includes housewives—typically those with small families—who would be available for industry provided arrangements for the care of young children could be made during the absence of the parents from the home.

The matter appearing hereafter is dealt with under the following sub-headings:—

- Placement Service Statistics.
- Rural Labour Provision.
- Shortage of Skilled Labour.
- The Placement Service and the War.

## PLACEMENT SERVICE STATISTICS.

Enrolments, vacancies, and placement figures in respect of both male and female workers are now dealt with in turn.

*Enrolments.*

At the end of March, 1941, there were 9,442 male and 389 female enrolments current with the Service. Corresponding figures at the same date in 1940 were 16,031 and 741. The enrolments of males in March, 1939, totalled 24,373, while female workers were not at that time catered for by the Service.

Since Scheme No. 13 workers appear on strength in the Placement Service current index—for transfer to private employment as it becomes available—the extent to which hitherto unused man-power has been availed of in industry is noteworthy. This point is made clearer by reference to the numbers of male enrolees as at 31st March, 1939, 1940, and 1941, who were Scheme No. 13 workers. The figures in question are 1939, 12,504; 1940, 8,627; 1941, 5,426. There are thus current at the present time approximately only 4,000 male enrolments other than those relating to Scheme No. 13 workers. As monthly placements in 1941 averaged 2,825, it is evident that non-Scheme No. 13 enrolments are being turned over very rapidly. In other words, apart from a few hundred "slow" enrolments, the non-Scheme No. 13 section of the current index is subject to a continual rise and fall which tends to be concealed by the fairly stable level of enrolments. The stability of the current index at its present level is also significant in that the termination of seasonal activities has brought no appreciable addition to the number of workers enrolling. In normal times seasonal unemployment extends each year to several thousands of male workers.

Table III of the Appendix gives particulars, according to industrial groups, of male enrolments effected with the Service during the year ended 31st March, 1941, and also those current at the end of this period. Female enrolments have been so few that a similar table has not been prepared in respect of them.