

females— were actually placed at this work by the Placement Officer at Nelson, the balance engaged undoubtedly came to the hop-fields as a result of the publicity given the matter by the Placement Service. With the close of the hop-picking season the workers who had proceeded to Nelson to undertake this work were in many instances later available for fruit- and tobacco-harvesting work, for which there is generally some shortage of labour. Thus the migration of so many seasonal workers to the district served several purposes.

SHORTAGE OF SKILLED LABOUR.

Shortage of certain types of labour, as in recent years, has again been observed during the period under review. This shortage has undoubtedly been accentuated by war conditions, and particularly does this apply to certain branches of the manufacturing and engineering industries.

Building tradesmen, the demand for whom is generally regarded as a reliable indication of the level of industrial activity and therefore of the demand for other types of skilled workers, have continued to be in short supply, but not seriously so. The 1939 report of the Employment Division of the Labour Department referred to the importation from Great Britain and Australia of several hundreds of various types of building tradesmen. The augmentation in the numbers of these artisans effected by these means has been much more than offset by the recruitment into the armed forces of men who happen also to be building tradesmen. However, marked falling off in the construction of industrial and commercial buildings as well as of dwellings, due largely to wartime conditions, has resulted in contraction of the demand for building artisans. Such shortage as is felt evinces itself as a source of local inconvenience and minor delays rather than as a general and serious scarcity of building tradesmen. The ultimate return to the Dominion of large numbers of ex-servicemen who are building tradesmen qualifies considerably conclusions which may in present circumstances be drawn apropos the sporadic shortages of carpenters, plasterers, electricians, and plumbers. For the most part scarcity of building-trades workers has indirectly been due to the calls made upon artisans for urgent and nationally-important undertakings. Examples which can be mentioned are construction of buildings for the Army and other Service Departments, erection of emergency freezing-works cool-store accommodation, and refitting of a hospital ship for servicemen invalided home from service overseas. Although it has been faced with difficulties in these cases, the Service has succeeded in locating the tradesmen required with sufficient despatch to permit of the completion of such works on schedule.

In the clothing- and footwear-manufacturing industries there has been a general shortage of trained male operatives and female machinists. Again this has been emphasized by the wartime demand for their output, but even before the beginning of the war Placement Officers reported a general shortage of clothing and woollen-mill operatives and of boot- and shoe-manufacturing workers. This has been coped with to an extent by the augmentation of skilled staffs with selected unskilled workers and by publicity to induce workers of these types otherwise engaged to return to their former occupation. There remains, however, a shortage of weaving and spinning workers in the woollen and clothing industries and of clickers, bench hands, and machinists in the footwear industry. Technical training of boot- and shoe-manufacturing tradesmen has been undertaken in Christchurch and Auckland through the technical schools in these centres, but it is too early to report any considerable easing of the demand for labour in consequence of such training.

It has been in the engineering trades, however, that the shortage of skilled labour has been most widespread and serious. Again wartime requirements have been an important cause. A survey of the requirements of engineering-shops as far as the various engineering tradesmen were concerned was undertaken by the Placement Service in September of 1940. This showed that employers throughout the Dominion considered that they could at that time absorb approximately 400 additional engineering tradesmen and 120 engineering apprentices. The tradesmen most in demand were boiler-makers, 50; fitters, 42; fitters and turners, 45; moulders, 45; machinists, 21; sheet-metal workers, 31; turners, 23; welders, 33; process workers, 50. The development of engineering activity, largely in connection with the war effort of the Dominion, since that time has made this shortage of tradesmen more serious. In consideration of the increasing demand for engineering artisans, Government established an auxiliary engineering-training scheme. Full-time training courses extending over a period of four months have been made available to selected applicants in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and trainees have received £4 13s. 4d. per week during their course of training. Already over a hundred men have completed, or are at present pursuing, their training in one or other of the trades in which the shortage of journeymen is considerable. Although the administration and subsidization of the scheme have been responsibilities of the Labour Department, the work of classifying applicants for selection, as well as that of securing employment for the trainees as their tuition is completed, has fallen to the Placement Service. It must be concluded that by means of this scheme the shortage of engineering tradesmen has been much alleviated, although it is not suggested that a shortage of these workers and others such as engineering and mechanical draughtsmen does not remain.

During the period reviewed the Placement Service has also been called upon to supply skilled and semi-skilled workers to the newly-launched linen-flax-manufacturing industry. Not a great deal of success in allocating such skilled factory operatives has been obtained, as workers of this type are rare in New Zealand. However, Placement Officers have been able to give valuable assistance to the Linen Flax Branch of the Industries and Commerce Department by locating workers suitable for training in the semi-skilled jobs offering in the linen-flax factories.