

In the matter of skilled labour shortage generally, it could be said that New Zealand industry during the last twelve months has been considerably inconvenienced by local shortages of particular types of workers, while workers of these types already in industry have been called upon to undertake longer hours of work. It would not, however, be correct to say that scarcity of skilled labour during the period discussed has led to noteworthy disorganization and wasteful bottlenecks in industry as a whole.

THE PLACEMENT SERVICE AND THE WAR.

Already reference has been made in this report to the problems that wartime industrial conditions have presented to the Placement Service.

The work of liaison with district Man-power Committees and Armed Forces Appeals Boards referred to in last year's report has continued and has extended greatly as the replacement of workers recruited for the armed forces becomes a more and more considerable task. Placement Officers have also been able to give valuable assistance to the Committees and Boards responsible for the reservation of workers whose calling up has been appealed against on grounds of public interest.

Acting as the field staff of the Repatriation Division of the National Service Department, the Placement Service has undertaken a growing volume of contact, placement, and welfare work in connection with the rehabilitation in civil life of returning ex-servicemen as well as those discharged from camps in New Zealand. The nature and extent of this work are fully covered in the Repatriation Division section of the report on the National Service Department activities.

It was to be expected that as the war continued more and more women would be absorbed by industry, and it must be concluded that the placement of females recorded by the Placement Service equals but a fraction of the vacancies in industry which have been filled by women during the year dealt with. This conclusion is invited by the very small number of female enrolments current with the Service and by the extreme difficulty in obtaining females for widely-published vacancies relating in many cases to positions carrying increasingly higher remuneration.

As commented upon elsewhere, war conditions have dominated the activities of the Service during the last year, and the point has been reached where further withdrawals of males from industry can be effected only at the cost of diminishing industrial activity in some or many spheres.

GOVERNMENT YOUTH CENTRES.

This is the fourth annual report of the Department in which the activities of the Government Youth Centres have been dealt with.

As mentioned in previous reports, Youth Centres were set up in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch in 1938, while a sub-Centre co-operating with the Wellington Centre was also opened at Napier. At Dunedin the work of juvenile vocational guidance and placement, carried out in the other main cities by Youth Centres, continued to be performed by the Dunedin Vocational Guidance Association, a body which had been doing this work for some time previously. The Dominion was subdivided into four areas to be administered for vocational-guidance purposes from the appropriate Centre or Association in the four main cities. Outside of these cities, with the exception of Napier, where the sub Youth Centre has been in operation, Placement Officers of the adult Placement Service have performed placement work among male and female youths, and in the matter of vocational guidance they have, where necessary, co-operated with the Vocational Guidance Officers at the nearest Youth Centre, or in the case of the lower South Island the Vocational Guidance Association at Dunedin.

During the year ended 31st March, 1941, boys numbering 1,975 and girls 2,299 enrolled for vocational guidance and placement with the Government Youth Centres, or in the case of Dunedin juveniles with the Vocational Guidance Association in that city. The distribution of these enrolments among age-groups is shown in Table VI of the Appendix, as is the prior status or source of the enrollees. This table reveals a somewhat disquieting position, in that it suggests that secondary-school education is not being made the most of and too many juveniles are coming to the Centres only after they have lost valuable time in blind-alley occupations or in ones for which they were, by reason of temperament or inability, unsuited. To illustrate: Only 2,387 of the 4,274 children enrolled during the period came to the Centres direct from schools. The balance of 1,887 enrolled from positions which they had obtained subsequent to leaving school. Nine hundred and sixty of those enrolled from school, plus work, were ex-secondary-school pupils. The conclusion invited is that many children do not follow through secondary-school courses, and their failure to do so, from the aspect of their future careers, cancels out the advantages of secondary-school training. This view, advanced in a previous report, receives added confirmation in the distribution of Youth Centre enrolments among age-groups. Table VI shows that 1,182 (or approximately 27 per cent.) of the total enrolments relate to juveniles of fifteen years or less who had either enrolled direct from secondary school or had left secondary school previously and had proceeded to employment which had not proved permanent. The experience of the Youth Centres in the main cities and at Napier, it is reasonable to conclude, parallels the position obtaining in most towns. The waste and misdirection of effort thus indicated implies considerable loss to the community as well as to the individual juveniles concerned.

Table VII gives particulars on an industrial-group basis of vacancies for juveniles notified to Youth Centres and the Dunedin Vocational Guidance Association during the twelve months ended 31st March, 1941. These, standing at 8,711, exceed aggregate enrolments during the same period by over 4,000, which suggests that youth-labour enrolling at the Centres listed could fill only half the vacancies held. Making due allowance for the lapsing of notified vacancies, it is apparent that in the Centres concerned there is a very considerable shortage of juvenile labour. Although the shortage is not so great in the secondary towns, it is nevertheless widespread.