

# REPORT

## SECTION 1.—GENERAL

THE year 1946-47 has been one of adjustment to a peacetime economy. This has not meant a return to pre-war conditions, since the dislocations caused by the war would make such a return impossible if not undesirable, but it has, rather, involved a reversion to a line of development and progress which was necessarily neglected in the stress of national emergency. The Department's responsibilities have materially increased, and attention will be drawn in this report to the new legislation which it has to administer, and to new developments in which it is taking an active part.

This is the last annual report of the Department of Labour as such. From 1st April, 1947, it became merged with the National Employment Service, and will be known in future as the Department of Labour and Employment.

## SECTION 2.—THE BACKGROUND TO EMPLOYMENT

### (1) GENERAL

The year has seen the productive resources of the country very fully utilized. A very high level of employment has prevailed.

### (2) SECONDARY INDUSTRY

The expansion of secondary industry proceeds as rapidly as possible in view of the difficulties being encountered. Among these are shortages of accommodation, labour, equipment, materials, and power. Reference to the statistics of registered factories later in this report will indicate that the development of factory industry is increasing the work of the Department. The new factories which have opened are, subject to the difficulties mentioned, likely to be more up to date, and to provide greater amenities, than was usual in pre-war years, and the Factories Act, 1946, will ensure that all new factories will provide conditions of work in accordance with modern trends.

It is to be noted that the 1945 census revealed a distinct urban drift between the census years 1936 and 1945, and no doubt this mirrors an increasing industrialization and a greater factory population (*Monthly Abstract of Statistics*, April, 1946, p. 15).

### (3) JUVENILES

The shortage of juveniles requires little comment. It is now accepted that this shortage represents a problem which will be with us for at least the next ten years. It is not yet as acute as it will be, and the full effects of the depression years are scarcely yet felt. The birth-rate declined in this country from 1921 until 1935, after which it began to increase and has, with the exception of two of the war years, continued to increase, the number of births for 1946 being the highest on record in New Zealand. We have so far experienced only the results of the slow but steady diminution down to 1930. It is only during 1947 that those born in 1931 will reach the age of sixteen and may leave school, and from 1947 onwards we can expect the "depression" birth-rate, which reached its lowest level in 1935, to show its full effects.

The raising of the school leaving age and the removing of a barrier to longer school attendance which has resulted from the introduction of family allowances have, of course, accentuated the scarcity of juniors, and employers have been constrained to use many novel devices in their competition for young workers. Apart from the decentralization of factories mentioned elsewhere, Inspectors have reported schemes whereby a bonus is paid to any employee obtaining the services of a junior. Similarly, firms have arranged