

Near correspondence of placements with enrolments and re-enrolments is also shown in groups 25 and 26 (national, public, and local-body works respectively), and this is accounted for by the fact that as placements of both kinds are generally made through the Department the opportunities for self-placement in either field are small.

Enrolments and re-enrolments for group 35 (commerce, dealing in commodities) considerably exceed placements in the same group for both periods surveyed in Table XI, possibly suggesting the increasing rationalization of the New Zealand economy, a process associated with a comparative reduction of the number of workers engaged in operations intermediary to the actual production and consumption of goods.

FARM-LABOUR PROVISION.

The system whereby surplus agricultural labour is dovetailed, through Head Office administration, with unsatisfied demand has continued to be used with gratifying results during the past dairying season. No opportunity has been lost to place the State Placement Service at the disposal of farmers and farm workers, and the extent to which both are patronizing the Placement Offices is proof that they value the assistance of the Service.

Notwithstanding the efficiency of a Dominion administration of farm placements, many farmers have during the dairying season been unable to procure labour of the kind they have been seeking, although in the winter months the difficulty is not to find farm-hands, but to find farm work for the farm hands available. Much of the difficulty encountered by farmers in finding labour during the height of the dairying season is attributable to the fact that the demand is mainly for experienced single men or youths, in both of which classes of workers a shortage exists. Unfortunately, relatively few farmers are able to supply suitable accommodation for married workers, and this aspect is an important factor in the alleged shortage of farm labour, whilst another is the greater attractions of other seasonal employment.

The officers of the Placement Service have made unabated efforts to interest youths and young men of the right type in farming as a career, and a farm-assistance scheme whereby the engagement of inexperienced youths has been subsidized for a limited period has been administered, but with numerical results less favourable than was anticipated following repeated complaints of shortage of labour.

PLACEMENT OF DISABLED MEN, AND WELFARE WORK.

Added to the more obvious functions of the State Placement Service has been considerable work of a welfare nature necessary to place disabled, indigent, and semi-subnormal workers in industry. This work has involved arrangements for the provision of clothing and accommodation for destitute enrollees, special endeavours to obtain suitable employment for disabled and semi-subnormal workers, and, where it has been necessary, negotiations with Hospital Boards for pre-placement medical attention.

The number of cases of this type handled annually by the Placement Service is well over a thousand, and when it is realized that in dealing with them much more time and effort is involved than in dealing with ordinary enrollees an idea of the responsibility of this facet of the Service's labours can readily be formed. In this socio-economic work the State Placement Service has had very valuable co-operation from Hospital Boards, religious organizations, and philanthropic institutions, while it has, of course, been assisted by employers, who, to an extent, setting aside economic considerations, have gone out of their way to create opportunities for the industrial absorption or rehabilitation of disabled and subnormal workers.

SHORTAGE OF SKILLED LABOUR.

During the period under review the shortage of skilled labour, to which allusion was made in last year's report, has continued to be felt. In the building and in certain of the engineering trades this shortage has been acute, and it has now become evident in some of the manufacturing industries which are endeavouring to expand local production.

Apart from the many ordinary apprenticeships which have been contracted in the skilled trades, the State Placement Service initially arranged, in the year 1938, 468 special apprenticeships and in the first quarter of 1939 a further 97 of such engagements. (N.B.—A special apprenticeship relates to a contract drawn in respect of an apprentice of eighteen years of age or over, a type of apprenticeship for various reasons not favoured by every employer.) The total number of apprenticeships of this kind arranged to date through the State Placement Service is 842. These special apprenticeships have been the outcome of a campaign conducted by the Service with the dual object of absorbing into industry those older youths between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five years who had lost their opportunity in consequence of the depression, and of overcoming, to a certain extent, the shortage of skilled workers in the various building and engineering trades.

Scheme No. 16.—This scheme, under which approved short-term adult apprenticeships and traineeships in the carpentering and bricklaying trades are subsidized by the State, was launched in September, 1937. The number of engagements current under the scheme at 31st March of this year was 438. Actually the number of apprenticeships effected under the scheme considerably exceeds that yet current, a number of contracts having lapsed on account of dissatisfaction on the part of either the worker or the employer, change of residence of the apprentice, and, it is presumed, the ability of certain of the more adaptable adult apprentices to command a journeyman's rate of pay before their full apprenticeship term had been served.

At 31st March of this year the subsidy disbursements under Scheme No. 16 since its inception in September, 1937, totalled £12,650. In addition to this expenditure, no fewer than 125 of the apprentices whose circumstances were needy were assisted by the Department to purchase tools of trade. This has been done by loans advanced by the Department and refunded by the apprentices out of wages—£562 5s. 9d. had been advanced by the Department as at 31st March, 1939, for this purpose.