

From 27th May, 1940, the subsidy rate under Scheme No. 4F (farm-labour-training scheme) was increased from £1 to £1 10s. per man-week for the first six months of an inexperienced workers' engagement, and during the second six months, where previously no subsidy had been applicable, one at the rate of 15s. per man-week was made available. Elsewhere in the departmental report detailed information concerning the operation of Scheme No. 4F is given, but it is worth mention here that this scheme in its revised form played an important part in the substantially successful farm-placement drive undertaken by the Placement Service during the season just closed. In the period 1st July, 1940, to 31st March, 1941, 1,051 placements under this scheme were effected.

The third part of the farm-placement drive took the form of a determined effort on the part of the Government to cope with the widespread shortage of rural accommodation. In June of 1940 it was announced that hutments for single farm workers and temporary dwellings for married men were being erected by the Public Works Department and made available to farmers. The single men's hutments could be either leased or purchased outright, but the dwellings for married men were obtainable only on a rental basis—albeit a very low one. The actual provision of these temporary accommodation units has been the responsibility of the State Advances Corporation and the Public Works Department, the two Departments concerned with the financial and constructional aspects of the scheme, but the State Placement Service has co-operated by receiving farmers' applications for accommodation units and by passing them on to the State Advances Corporation. Detailed comment on the results of this scheme is the function of the two Departments concerned, but it can be said here that during the period 1st July, 1940, to 31st March, 1941, accommodation units for 671 married and 175 single farm workers were supplied. To that extent, placements of farm workers additional to those which would ordinarily be possible were effected. Apart from the provision of temporary accommodation units, wide publicity was given and in this the Placement Service assisted actively—to the availability of finance for rural housing under the Rural Housing Act of 1938. As at 31st March, 1941, the State Advances Corporation had given precedent consent to 205 applications for financial assistance to erect dwellings under this Act.

To encourage farmers to apply for loans under the Rural Housing Act to erect permanent accommodation for farm employees, it was arranged that in the case of those farmers who made early application and for whom loans were approved, 10 per cent. of the loan would be regarded as a free grant, the cost of such free grant or bonus being met from the Employment Promotion Fund. Expenditure under this heading for the year ended 31st March, 1941, amounted to £928.

Furthermore, until accommodation could be provided either by way of rented units or by dwellings erected under the rural housing scheme, a special housing-allowance of £1 per week was made available to married men who were willing to part temporarily from their families and accept single accommodation with farmers. The number of men assisted in this way declined steadily as temporary accommodation units were made available, but the fact that at one time—the height of the season—the allowance was being paid to 116 married men illustrates that this measure, too, made a not inconsiderable contribution to the solution of the farm-labour problem.

It has been the experience of the State Placement Service that the shortage of farm labour in the Dominion has not been so great as is popularly supposed. That there has been a shortage of experienced dairy- and sheep-farm hands is true, but the farm-placement drive already referred to was substantially successful in keeping manned the farms of the Dominion, notwithstanding the drain of rural workers into the armed forces. Table IV of the Appendix affords an interesting illustration of the trends, during the period 1st July, 1940, to 31st March, 1941, of farm labour available and vacancies as recorded by the Placement Service. In this table all farm groups and all types of labour figure. Table IV of the Appendix also shows the provincial distribution at various points in the season of all types of farm labour available and vacancies notified to the Service.

Early in the farming season just concluded the view that seasonal labour for cropping and harvesting operations would be most difficult to obtain was widespread among farmers. However, as in past years, men were released as required from scheme No. 13 and public-works undertakings, and by this means, as well as by recourse to female and school-boy volunteers, the most difficult period in the season passed without noteworthy loss of or damage to crops due to seasonal labour shortage. In the South Canterbury district, to cite one example, a shortage of approximately 200 teamsters, tractor-drivers, and harvesting hands was met by the release of this number of men from public works.

The enrolment and placement of volunteer secondary-school boys during their Christmas vacation was this season organized on a Dominion-wide basis for the first time. Placement Officers, co-operating with the Secretaries of Government Youth Centres in the four main centres, approached secondary-school boys through the college principals and ascertained particulars of those willing to undertake farm employment during their school holiday. As a result of these arrangements 318 of 754 lads who volunteered for vocational farm employment were placed for varying short periods in the following ways: On sheep-farms, 50; on dairy-farms, 114; on mixed farms, 62; and on purely seasonal farm-work, 92. Thus the services of 436 school-boys who were willing to assist in seasonal farm operations were not availed of by farmers, notwithstanding that farmers who were known to be requiring farm labour were notified by Placement Officers of the availability of school-boy workers.

Early in 1941 urgent representations for assistance to obtain hop-pickers were made by the organized hop-growers of Nelson District to the Head Office of the Placement Service. Over 500 pickers were required almost at once, and hop-growers were pessimistic about obtaining the necessary labour. In consequence of a special publicity campaign by the Placement Service, in which the co-operation of the National and Commercial Broadcasting Services was readily obtained, hop-growers in Nelson Province obtained all of the pickers whom they required. Although only 298 pickers—chiefly