

In recent months it has been found possible to employ women on important technical work in radio-location stations, and fresh increases of personnel are at present required for this and other purposes.

The Women's Royal Naval Service (New Zealand).—The employment of women on naval stations was commenced at the end of May, 1942, when conditions of service were issued and the training of women telegraphists was commenced.

An extension of the utilization of women to include also their employment in shorthand-typing, clerical, pay and general office work, cooking, waiting, motor-driving, dental assistance, and messenger services has resulted in the gradual building up to a total strength of some two hundred and fifty at the present time.

The Women's Auxiliary Army Corps.—Though rather later in commencing, the establishment of a women's section of the Army, as a recognized part of the home defence forces, was finally brought about as a measure designed to conserve man-power, and up to date more than three thousand women have been posted for service as cooks, waitresses, mess hands, anti-aircraft assistants, stores assistants, canteen attendants, transport drivers, signallers, clerks, and typists.

The field of service for women in the Army is greater than in the other branches of the forces, so that much scope still remains for their employment in order to release men for other duties.

Protection of Industry against Loss of Women from Skilled or Essential Work.—Though the intake of women into the forces has been on a small scale relatively to that of men, there have nevertheless been a fair number of instances where women who had acquired a considerable degree of skill, and were engaged on war contract or other essential work, had volunteered for service with the forces.

In order to protect essential industries and services against the loss of these women it has been arranged for all enrolment forms from women desiring to join the forces to be examined by District Man-power Officers, and only those women who can either be spared or replaced are permitted to proceed with their applications. In addition to this precaution, a right of appeal to an Armed Forces Appeal Board is provided to the losing employer.

With these safeguards, the policy of utilizing women to replace men within the armed forces is receiving every possible assistance and encouragement from this Department.

The Women's Land Service.—In the earlier stages the utilization of woman-power on the land was organized in the form of a Women's Land Corps under the auspices of the W.W.S.A. Recruitment was on a voluntary basis, conditions of pay were fixed, and a light uniform and one pair of overalls were provided.

In this form the scheme was not a great success, partly owing to the prejudice of farmers against the employment of women and partly owing to the inadequacy of the uniform and other conditions. The whole scheme was therefore remodelled so as to provide a very complete set of working apparel and dress uniform, as well as improved rates of pay. Under this scheme the Corps was re-constituted in September, 1942, as the Women's Land Service.

Since this re-organization a much better response to the scheme has been secured, and membership exceeded six hundred by the end of March, 1943.

18. THE FULL SCALE ORGANIZATION OF CIVIL DEFENCE

The early origins of the civil defence organizations, and the way in which their personnel was provided, were described earlier in this report. It is now proposed to present a brief sketch of the lines along which these organizations were developed in conditions of compulsory service and under the threat of invasion or bombardment from the sea or air.

Shelter Protection.—The urgent need for air-raid shelters led to the passing, early in January, 1942, of special Emergency Shelter Regulations which provided for the construction of public and business shelters and for compensation for land and buildings taken over for this purpose, also adjustments in rents, &c. Following on these regulations, certain "vulnerable areas" were defined, covering the main centres and secondary ports, and these towns were required to carry out a programme of shelter-construction.

Since that date a large number of shelters have been provided. The first constructed were open or slit trenches, though these have in many cases now been covered in, and in all the main centres and sea-port towns a general system of splinter-proof surface shelters has been adopted. Where possible, this method has also been extended to include tunnelling, and in towns where there are the larger type of reinforced buildings, basement shelters have been provided in suitable buildings. For the most part the shelters have been available to the general public, but considerable work has also been done on shelters constructed by business concerns for the protection of their staffs or other occupants of their buildings. A 75-per-cent. Government subsidy is available for public shelters, local authorities meeting the remaining 25 per cent. of the cost, and in the case of business shelters, the Government subsidy is 50 per cent., the local authority and the building owners each providing 25 per cent. of the cost.

In addition, every encouragement has been given to householders to provide themselves with their own domestic shelters, and for this purpose standard specifications have been prepared and made available to the public. A standard code of shelter construction was also introduced. To date shelter has been provided for approximately 150,000 of the population located in the most vulnerable centres, and the cost to the Government has been in the vicinity of £700,000.

Gas Protection.—A quantity of equipment to deal with a possible gas attack has been received in New Zealand and distributed to those centres considered as most vulnerable to gas attack. The main centres have also established decontamination centres and are pursuing an extensive course of training. A large number of civilian-type respirators have been manufactured in New Zealand, and these have been distributed to the more vulnerable centres. The policy in regard to gas precautions has been based on the best advice available, including the recommendations of a British Gas Liaison Mission which visited the Dominion to advise the Government upon various matters connected with gas warfare.