

**254.** Shortly before the outbreak of war the Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John had undertaken the training of female volunteers in order to equip them to assist in public hospitals in emergencies. These volunteers were known as Voluntary Aids. During the war period recruitment of Voluntary Aids was stepped up until the peak strength of the organization exceeded 10,000. Aids were required to undertake one month's hospital work each year in centres where staff shortages were acute, and this helped materially to alleviate staffing difficulties and enabled full-time staff to have their much-needed annual holiday break. As an additional measure the Civil Nursing Reserve was established by the Department of Health, consisting of registered nurses and Voluntary Aids. The Reserve formed a full-time mobile group under the control of the Director of Nursing, and members were assigned by her to the various public hospitals as and when their services were required.

**255.** District Man-power Officers played a considerable part in the Voluntary Aid and Civil Nursing Reserve schemes. Where necessary, directions were used to ensure that Aids were released by their employers for the one month's hospital duty each year. The strength of the Civil Nursing Reserve was also built up by the direction of Aids to the Reserve for full-time hospital work where circumstances permitted.

**256.** In addition to these measures, it was necessary to pursue an active direction policy in order to provide wardmaids, kitchen, and laundry staff. In the Wellington, Auckland, and Hawke's Bay districts it was eventually found necessary to place all single girls of twenty-one and twenty-two years of age under a universal obligation to perform twelve months' hospital service as required. In Auckland the necessity for this step was due largely to the opening-up of the 39th General Hospital in January, 1945, requiring a total staff of 574, followed some months later by the opening of the Middlemore Hospital, requiring a staff of 289. Similarly, the position in Wellington was largely due to the opening, in August, 1945, of the Silverstream Hospital and extensions to the main hospitals at Wellington and Lower Hutt. As at 31st March, 1946, recorded male vacancies in public hospitals were negligible, but female vacancies were as follows :—

Nurses 173 (including 59 at Auckland and 57 at Wellington).

Others 682 (including 98 at Auckland, 209 at Wellington, 112 at Christchurch, and 44 at Dunedin).

**257.** In Wellington, where the position, once controls were abolished, was particularly acute, the Hospital Board sought the assistance of the Department. With this assistance certain changes in staff organization, together with an intensive campaign for staff, were in progress at the end of March, and as a result it appears probable that the vacancies will be largely met in the near future.

**258.** The task of the Department, in meeting the staffing requirements of mental hospitals was even more difficult, although smaller numbers were involved. Here again the greatest difficulty was experienced in providing female, rather than male labour.

**259.** When efforts to recruit female nurses for mental hospitals did not succeed in obtaining the required numbers, compulsory direction of suitable types had to be resorted to. Public prejudice against the compulsory direction of girls to employment in mental hospitals was strong, largely owing to a misconception of the duties of mental nurses and the atmosphere of mental institutions. This prejudice was substantially overcome in some districts following an intensive publicity campaign involving the use of newspapers, radio, printed matter, and church appeals. A campaign launched in Invercargill in February, 1945, resulted in 21 girls going forward to the Seacliff Mental Hospital in the first few weeks, appeals being lodged in only 4 of these cases. A campaign organized by the Department in Wellington in June, 1945, achieved notable success. Some hundreds of girls were interviewed by officers of the Department, and in the course of a few weeks 49 girls had voluntarily taken up employment at the Porirua Mental Hospital and 9 other volunteers expressing a preference for appointment to