

in excess of 7 per cent. of the peak labour force in each works. As a result of this review the number of Category "A" men held on appeal was reduced from 1,567 as at 28th February, 1945, to 1,061 as at 15th August, 1945.

286. Following the defeat of Japan, consideration was given to the question of revoking the declaration of essentiality covering freezing-works. Although it was apparent that the male labour situation would improve as the demobilization of the Forces progressed, the staffing of the industry could not be left to chance, and it was decided, therefore, to retain the declaration for the 1945-46 season. However, in accordance with the Government's desire to avoid the use of compulsory measures wherever possible, every effort was made by District Man-power Officers to staff works on a voluntary basis, and the powers of direction were resorted to only where works could not otherwise be fully manned. Extensive publicity and a radio appeal to workers to undertake employment in the freezing-works went a long way towards achieving the objective of meeting the requirements of the industry without recourse to compulsory direction.

(x) Engineering, Ship Building and Repair

287. Prior to the outbreak of war the engineering industry was expanding its activities in the manufacturing field. As a consequence there was some staff shortage even then, particularly in respect of skilled tradesmen. To meet that shortage several hundred tradesmen had been recruited from Australia, and the Labour Department had sponsored a scheme for the training of auxiliary tradesmen in fitting and turning, and welding. With the outbreak of war the auxiliary training scheme was extended, and by the time it was merged with the trade-training schools of the Rehabilitation Department in February, 1944, 478 auxiliary workers had been trained, 134 of whom were welders.

288. In 1939 there were 1,331 units in the industry (taking its broadest ramifications, but excluding the Railways and other Government Departments and local bodies). These units were then employing some 16,500 males and 2,000 females, making a total labour force of 18,500. There were some 12,000 employees in general engineering (including agricultural and dairy machinery) and some 6,500 employees, in electrical engineering, radio-manufacture, ship building and repair, motor assembly, coach-building, aircraft engineering, engraving, and stamp-die making. By October, 1945, the number of units had increased to 1,443 and a survey covering 1,234 of these units showed that they were then employing 17,634 males and 2,912 females.

289. During the war years the industry was called upon for a tremendous war effort, which included the manufacture of wireless sets, Sten guns, Bren-gun carriers, bombs, grenades, fuses, aeroplane-fuel tanks, water-bottles, steel helmets, wire nails, barbed wire, ammunition, batteries, agricultural machinery and implements, the manufacture and maintenance of machinery used in essential production and services, the repair of vehicles and equipment from the Pacific War Zone, the building and repair of aircraft, repair of ships, the fitting of defensive armament and protective equipment to ships, and the building of minesweepers, Fairmile patrol boats, tow-boats, steel tugs, powered lighters, and barges of various types. In addition, it continued to meet civilian requirements of high priority.

290. Consequently the industry was always accorded the high priority which the importance of its contribution to the war effort demanded. It was also necessary, however, to establish priorities within the industry, ship building and repair and the manufacture of munitions being accorded absolute priority over all other branches of the industry.

291. The change-over to war production commenced soon after the outbreak of war, and skilled tradesmen were being withheld from military service as early as 1940. In determining and meeting the labour requirements of the industry, and of individual units,