

established in the main centres of Maori population, and these sections (working in close contact with the tribal committees and with Maori Utilization Committees) were able to secure the willing services of Maori workers in many critically short-staffed industries throughout New Zealand. Maori workers were made subject to man-power direction and control to the same extent as others, and it is worthy of note that virtually all directions issued by District Man-power Officers (who acted in close consultation with the tribal committees and Maori Utilization Committees) were accepted without appeal. The total number of Maoris employed in essential undertakings at 1st April, 1945, is estimated to have been 15,000. Some 10,000 direction orders had then been issued to Maoris.

SECTION V.—THE WOMEN'S LAND SERVICE

337. In 1940, when it became apparent that steps would have to be taken to supplement the male farm labour force, which had already been considerably reduced through enlistments in the Armed Forces, the Women's Land Service was established, and this Service made a very important industrial contribution to New Zealand's war effort.

338. Recruitment of members for this Service, or the Women's Land Corps as it was first called, was originally undertaken by the Women's War Service Auxiliary. In September, 1942, however, when the strength of the corps was still very small, a complete reorganization of the scheme was undertaken, and the Women's Land Service was developed.

339. The main features of the reorganization were :—

- (a) The basic weekly wages were increased from 35s. and 42s. 6d. to 41s. and 48s. 6d.
- (b) The Service uniform and working apparel were liberalized.
- (c) The engagement of relatives under the scheme was approved for the first time.
- (d) Recruitment became the direct responsibility of the District Man-power Officers.

340. In this form the Service was made more attractive to women and farmers, and by the end of September, 1943 (one year after the reorganization) the total active strength had increased to 954. As, however, there was still a great demand for Land Girls a short but very intensive radio and press membership campaign was undertaken in October, 1943, and by the 31st March, 1944, the active strength of the Service had reached the very satisfactory figure of 1,879, all districts being affected, particularly the Waikato and Taranaki districts in the case of dairy farms, and the Hawkes' Bay, Canterbury, and Otago districts in the case of other farms.

341. Membership of the Service reached its peak in September, 1944, when the number of members employed on farms totalled 2,088. From then on, however, there was a steady decline in the strength, and by 31st March, 1945, the total had been reduced to 1,850 and to 1,228 by 31st March, 1946, at which date arrangements were being made for the disbanding of the Service as from 30th April, 1946.

342. This decline was due partly to the easing of the farm-labour position caused by the return of servicemen from overseas, but in the later stages was accelerated by the marriage of many members to ex-servicemen, and by many girls resigning from membership of the Service to transfer to employment which appeared to have better prospects of permanency.

343. On the 12th June, 1944, the acceptance for membership of the Service of girls working on the farms of near relatives was discontinued, and on the termination of hostilities on 15th August, 1945, all recruitment ceased.

344. Having regard to the substantial increases in the rates of wages for male farm workers, and to the increases in pay to women members of the Armed Forces, granted early in 1945, the rates of wages payable to members of the Women's Land Service were increased by 10s. a week as from 1st June, 1945.