

448. Absorption of increased numbers of women into industry was an important factor in enabling New Zealand to contribute such a large number of men to the allied Armed Forces and to remain a major food-producer without seriously impairing her industrial effort in other directions. The return of servicemen and their reabsorption into civil life focuses attention on the outlook for women in industry. At 31st December, 1945, there were 22,000 less men and 20,000 more women in industry than at the outbreak of war, but vacancies for women exceeded those for men, there being 6,012 notified vacancies for men, as against 7,520 vacancies for women. At 31st March, 1946, there were 7,106 vacancies for men and 9,929 for women. Three important factors should be considered in reference to the increasing shortage of women in industry :—

(a) The female labour force reduced rapidly due to increasing marriages, &c., during the year 1945, the rate of withdrawal probably being particularly high in late 1945 and early 1946.

(b) Women have during the war proved their ability to undertake many occupations, especially in transport and communication, in commerce and finance, and in public administration and professional services, which were previously regarded as an exclusive field for men.

(c) There has been continued growth of a type of light industry requiring predominantly female labour, especially in the clothing, textiles, and leather group of secondary manufactures.

SECTION III.—DISTRICT-BY-DISTRICT EMPLOYMENT POSITION OVER THE TWELVE MONTHS

Whangarei District

449. For males in this district (with available vacancies notified exceeding, on an average, the numbers of those disengaged and seeking employment through the Department by approximately 6 to 1 over the period) the employment position has been good, though the range of employment offering has not been so great as in the case of most other districts. There has also been a shortage of female labour, as evidenced by the vacancies notified at the end of each month, which fluctuated between 68 and 33, as compared with no more than 2 persons registered as disengaged at any one time.

450. Lack of housing and accommodation for single men has influenced to some extent the availability of labour for some industries grouped within this district (particularly farming and cement works). The demand for skilled tradesmen has greatly exceeded that for unskilled labour, though even for unskilled men, particularly fit men, the demand has exceeded the supply, and no particular difficulties have been experienced in the placement of any men available. The most steady demand for skilled men during the year has come from the building and construction industry, in which there has been a constant shortage of skilled tradesmen.

(a) *Farm-produce.*—The exceptionally dry season, amounting to drought conditions, experienced towards the latter part of 1945 and early part of 1946 had a marked effect, particularly on the dairy-farming industry. Reduction in butterfat-production, as reflected also in dairy-factory production, meant a comparatively short season, and with it a lesser demand for the employment of farm hands, though it is to be noted that there was no recorded increase in the numbers of disengaged farm labourers enrolled as seeking employment.

(b) *Cement-works.*—In the cement works some difficulties were experienced during the year in obtaining sufficient employees, both skilled and unskilled. More vacancies might have been filled but for insufficient accommodation for men available from rural districts. Arrangements now made for the provision of additional accommodation for 30 single men will assist the position. Shortages of coal-supplies have also had an effect on the demands for labour.

(c) *Timber-mills.*—Demands received for labour have been very limited, the highest recorded number standing at 3 only. A severe loss to the district was the destruction of the mill at Omahutu, employing approximately 25 men.

(d) *Hospitals and Hotels.*—The shortage of domestic staff has been evident throughout most hospitals and hotels in the district, particularly in the rural areas, and the position has not shown any signs of improvement.

(e) *Ahipara Gumfields.*—A recent survey in the north in the Mangonui County shows that there is no shortage of employment in this area. Considerable numbers of Maoris have been engaged on the gumfields latterly.

(f) *Returned Servicemen.*—In general, no difficulties have been experienced in assisting in the placement of returned servicemen back into industry, apart from temporary delays occasioned through accommodation difficulties or, in limited cases, a preference to wait for alternative opportunities rather than to accept work immediately offering.