

107. During the year ended 31st March, 1944, 23,900 men were released from the Forces. This large total of releases was due largely to further reduction in the home-defence Forces. Other service personnel released in this period included down-graded men from the Pacific war zone, and the Forestry and Railway units from the European war zone.

108. In 1944–45 the most significant man-power release development was the return of the bulk of the Third Division from the Pacific theatre and the direction of these men to essential industry. Up to the end of November, 1944, some 10,500 men had returned from the Pacific and some 9,500 had been directed into essential or other important work. In addition, a further 13,900 men were released from home-defence units as a result of Appeal Board and Man-power Office action.

109. From the end of March, 1945, up to VJ Day Appeal Boards and Man-power Officers were instrumental in securing the release of some 3,500 men and 200 women. In addition, over 24,000 service personnel were released during this period as a result of the accelerated reduction in strength following victory in Europe. Table 15 of the Appendix shows the progress of releases from the Armed Forces from the outset to the end of March, 1946.

(ii) General Demobilization

110. Prior to the end of hostilities a special committee had been appointed to investigate the procedure to be adopted in demobilizing personnel from the Armed Forces. The surrender of Japan came with unexpected suddenness before the proposals of this Committee could be formulated to Government. Urgent action was nevertheless called for if delay was to be avoided in commencing a maximum possible demobilization of home-defence personnel. The National Service Department, which had been represented on the Committee, therefore, put forward on VJ Day its own proposals for demobilization of Armed Forces personnel within New Zealand. These proposals were submitted to Government and approved within a matter of hours.

111. Employers generally were invited to apply for men in the Forces who were needed by them. All applications were to be made to District Man-power Officers, who would then determine the priority of the application and negotiate directly with the appropriate military authorities. Applications for release of men to the following industries were to have first priority:—

Farming.	Coal-mining.
Shearers.	Carpenters.
Musterers	Electricians.
Dairy factories.	Plumbers.
Sawmilling.	Painters.

Applications for release for employment in any of the above groups was to be accepted and recommended where it was established that there was a reasonable need for the workers in the industry. The Armed Forces, for their part, would make a maximum effort to release men applied for in these groups.

112. Other applications for release—*i.e.*, on compassionate grounds and for other industries—were to be recommended by Man-power Officers to the Military authorities only where the application rested on exceptionally strong grounds, it being necessary to safeguard the Forces against too great a measure of disorganization while they still had important tasks to discharge in connection with the maintenance or disposal of equipment, the handling of demobilization, and the maintenance of minimum overseas forces.

113. Apart from applications for release, the Services would proceed with general demobilization at the maximum possible rate in the following order of priority:—

- (a) Those who had completed four years' service :
- (b) Married men with children :
- (c) Youths under twenty years and six months of age :
- (d) Persons over thirty-five years of age.