

in the future. It may not be difficult to keep a buoyant employment position in New Zealand in times of world prosperity. It will be more difficult to maintain that advantage in a world-wide depression. One of the first essentials is a constant and careful watch on employment and other economic trends, and as its counterpart there must be prompt action to correct any weaknesses whose development threatens to lessen the capacity of industry to make adequate use of the available labour force.

534. While the incidence in New Zealand of known vacancies far in excess of unemployed workers means that the objective of full employment has been attained and passed, the situation is not without its difficulties. The outlook for New Zealand is, however, probably brighter than for many countries. The following factors will materially assist the work of the National Employment Service in maintaining full employment :—

(a) An early start has been made with the provision of adequate employment information. A large portion of industry was surveyed by the National Service Department as at October, 1945, and the Employment (Information) Regulations provide for future returns of information from industry.

(b) Some elasticity in the size of the labour force is obtainable by decentralization of industry. Adequate information as to available labour and wages rates in various districts will enable industry to choose wisely and so promote balance and harmony in the economic and social structure.

(c) The inelastic nature of the supply of farming products, coupled with the regularity of the monetary return as a result of the guaranteed-price system, has a considerable steadying effect in New Zealand, where farming is the occupation of 30 per cent. of the male labour force.

(d) New Zealand's progressive policy with regard to sickness, unemployment, family, and age benefits is an insurance against over-violent fluctuations in purchasing-power.

(e) There still remains a considerable amount of public development work to be carried out, and with adequate employment information available these works can be commenced at the time and place in which they are most needed to absorb available labour and to provide added purchasing-power as a stimulant to industry.

(f) Various other factors at present operative (import control, stabilization, &c.) also tend to act as shock-absorbers for New Zealand industry against the effects of more violent fluctuations overseas.

535. New Zealand has full employment, and, though the task may be a difficult one if world conditions change, she has the resources and the organization to assist her to maintain it. The development of full employment in other countries will be a source of vital concern to New Zealand, but, whatever may happen overseas, the maintenance of full employment appears within practicable reach within the structure of New Zealand's present-day economy.

PART VI.—HOME AID SERVICE

536. The Government for a long period has been aware of the need for providing domestic assistance in the home for the relief of hardship when the housewife becomes incapacitated by reason of maternity, sickness, &c. Representations had continually been made by various women's organizations to the Government that some form of domestic relief should be given to women, and in 1944 a conference of women's organizations throughout the Dominion was called by the Minister of Health to receive suggestions, in an endeavour to formulate a plan for such relief.

537. As there were difficulties in the way of introducing such a scheme during the war, due mainly to the shortage of female labour available to take up this work, the matter was held in abeyance until 1945, when the Minister of Health again discussed the whole question with the National Council of Women through officers of the Wellington Branch of that Council. This Department was brought into the discussions at this stage as it was apparent that the operation of a domestic-service scheme such as that envisaged came within the scope of the functions of the Department in its post-war work as an Employment Service.

538. The Department was accordingly requested to formulate a detailed scheme to give effect to the principles agreed upon. This was done, and the proposals submitted by the Department were endorsed at a further meeting of those interested with the Minister of Health. The service to be established was to be known as the Home Aid Service, and the workers employed in the Service were to be designated Home Aids.