

It is quite evident that all the industries, trades, and professions which in the past have been accustomed to recruit new staff from the juvenile population each year leaving schools will be forced to revise their ideas. Those industries and trades which normally recruit juveniles with primary-school education only will find an even more diminished pool to the extent that more children will receive secondary education. Administrative and professional services have benefited in their task of recruiting young labour by the greater numbers receiving secondary education. For the next ten to fifteen years juvenile labour will be at a premium and the economic and social effects will be important.

(d) Loss of Trade Training in Depression and War Years

The aggregate labour resources of the Dominion cannot be measured solely by volume. Skill in an extraordinary variety of occupations is also necessary, and the past twenty years have witnessed great dislocations in the training of large proportions of the population. First the depression of the "thirties" ruined the chances of many young people acquiring a trade. Apprentices in skilled trades in 1928 numbered 10,227, but in 1935 there were only 3,329, and it was not until 1940 that the number reached 10,000 again. In 1928 there was one apprentice for every 142 population, whereas in 1935 the figure had climbed to one in 469, and 1944 one in 168. Industries which suffered most were building and construction—i.e., bricklaying, carpentry, joinery, masonry, painting, plastering, plumbing, gas-fitting, leadlight and glass bevelling, where the apprentices in 1935 were only a fifth of the number in 1928. On the other hand, appreciable increases in the apprentices in bootmaking, clothing, general and motor engineering, furniture, jewellery, watchmaking, photo-engraving, printing, and tinsmithing were shown in 1944 over the numbers in those trades in 1928.

The second major disturbance to the training of the labour force was the onset of war. A very large proportion of the total available man-power spent varying periods in the Armed Forces learning the arts of war instead of those of peace, the younger men missing the best years of their lives for training as artisans, and the older ones losing some of their acquired skill through lack of practice. Ten thousand lost their lives, others were maimed, wounded, suffered such physical mental and emotional hardships as to impair their efficiency as operatives for varying periods, and generally all were unsettled. Of the balance who remained in civilian work, a large proportion were engaged on war work, which often gave a different type of training from that required in peacetime.

This lack of training in the depression and war years is the prime cause of the shortage of skilled men available to-day, but the shortage is being made good as rapidly as possible by the operation of trade-training schools for returned servicemen, particularly for building craftsmen.

(e) Changes in Proportions of Workers and Dependants

The proportion of the total population of a country which works for its living, or a portion of it, at any particular time, depends on the productive resources of that country in relationship to the standard of living desired by the community and their social customs. Productive resources include the technical and organizational skill of entrepreneurs and managers and the intelligence and dexterity of workers. Social customs include standards of education, provision for dependants, desire for leisure at the expense of material wealth. During the past decade decided changes have taken place in New Zealand's productive resources and social customs. Substantial additions to capital equipment in primary, manufacturing, transport, and distributive industries and greater skill in its use have materially increased production per unit of labour and hence rendered possible the maintenance or increase in total production of goods and services with a smaller labour force. Evolution of social thought has led to reduced working-hours, more holidays, better provision for dependants through social security legislation, improved health and educational facilities, and other measures designed to spread more evenly the benefits of increasing production. It is interesting to note the effects of falling birth and death rates on the age-distribution of the population. Obviously the proportion of young people has declined and that of the elderly has risen. Between 1881 and 1945 the percentage of the total population under fifteen years of age has declined from 42.5 to 24.8, while that of persons 65 and over has risen from 1.4 to 8.4. These two groups may be considered to be almost completely "dependent" for their means of life, and their aggregate percentage has fallen between 1881 and 1945 from 43.9 to 33.2 per cent. of the population. The middle group, in which are found almost the whole of the working population, was 56.1 per cent. of the total in 1881 and in 1945 it had risen to 66.8.

(f) Geographical Distribution of Population

In 1858 the North Island had a larger population than the South Island, but thereafter the South took the lead and retained it until the end of the century. The present century has witnessed a steadily rising proportion of the population residing in the North Island, and in 1945 it had reached 67.3 per cent. During the past ten years the population of the South Island has been almost static and 99.8 per cent. of the total increase in the Dominion's population between 1936 and 1945 was in the North Island.

Changes in the distribution of population between urban and rural centres have resulted in a reversal of the proportions between 1881 and 1945. In the earlier year 40 per cent. of the people lived in cities and boroughs, but by 1945 the percentage had moved up to 63. This phenomenon is often referred to as the drift from the country to the towns, but it is an inevitable development.