

The following table gives some idea of the extent of hired labour on New Zealand farms. Hired female labour has always been of such relatively little importance that it is not mentioned here :—

*Table No. 83.—Table showing the Number of Male Wage-earners on Farms in New Zealand from 1901 to 1936*

| Year.      | Number. | Index No. of Wage-earners on Farms. | Index No. of Male Population. |
|------------|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1901 .. .. | 32,081  | 1000                                | 1000                          |
| 1906 .. .. | 35,778  | 1115                                | 1160                          |
| 1911 .. .. | 39,439  | 1229                                | 1319                          |
| 1916 .. .. | 39,600  | 1235                                | 1359                          |
| 1921 .. .. | 47,758  | 1487                                | 1535                          |
| 1926 .. .. | 47,279  | 1474                                | 1691                          |
| 1936 .. .. | 62,508  | 1948                                | 1863                          |

NOTE.—1945 figures not available.

This table shows a steady increase until 1921 in the amount of hired labour on dairy-farms. It does not show in such a marked fashion the recession between 1921 and 1926, which is seen in the figures concerning farmers employing labour and farmers working on their own account, as was shown in the previous table. When the figure for the later years is compared with the figure showing the increase in actual production during the period it suggests that the efficiency of farm labour was considerably increased as a result of the changes in farm management during the period. The very great increase in 1936 is another indication of the effects of the depression in redirecting population into rural pursuits. No figures are available for a date later than 1936, but if the figure given earlier, showing the increase in the total farming population of the period, is indicative of the general trend during the war, it is probable that the quantity of farm labour remained at a very high figure for the period between 1936 and 1945.

Although farming was not formally declared an essential industry during the war it was always treated as such. Farm workers could normally obtain a postponement in their calling up for military service, and they were always given some preference in release from the Forces. As a consequence, the numbers engaged in farm work did not fall at as great a rate as employees in other industries. In fact, there is, as stated above, some evidence that the numbers of farm workers increased during the war. This is quite apart from the arrangement during the latter part of the war whereby members of the Armed Forces assisted in harvesting and other seasonal work.

To sum up this analysis of the farm population situation, it can be said that during the period under review there was a steady increase in farming population until 1921. Between 1921 and 1926 farming population tended to decrease, probably as a result of increasing mechanization and the improvement in farm management techniques and as a result of certain lands going out of production. The movements between 1926 and 1945 have been caused by certain extraneous factors, as, for instance, the depression and the war. The previous analysis will show that there was no tendency to reduction in the size of farms or to any recession in farm-management techniques or in mechanization. If, in addition to this, the increased production is taken into account, it will be realized that, although the labour requirements per unit of production have fallen, labour has become more efficient.

Another view of this same problem can be seen from the following table :—

*Table No. 84.—Table showing Numbers engaged in Farming per Occupied Holding from 1901 to 1945*

|            |      |            |      |
|------------|------|------------|------|
| 1901 .. .. | 1.36 | 1921 .. .. | 1.44 |
| 1906 .. .. | 1.34 | 1926 .. .. | 1.57 |
| 1911 .. .. | 1.39 | 1936 .. .. | 1.71 |
| 1916 .. .. | 1.39 | 1945 .. .. | 1.78 |

NOTE.—The figure for 1945 must be taken with very great caution, for the reasons stated earlier, but in general it shows the trend.