

however, it must be borne in mind that these figures do not take into account the servicemen overseas, of whom there were, as stated before, approximately 45,000 in 1945 for the whole of New Zealand. As has been said earlier in this Section, it is estimated that approximately 16,000 or 17,000 of these servicemen were from the South Island, but since only a small proportion of these would be resident in the rural areas the actual effect would be small. Similarly, for war purposes, either by man-power direction or otherwise, quite a number of South Island residents came to the North Island. This number, however, although considerable absolutely, is relatively of little significance.

With the exception of Auckland, Wellington, and Marlborough, the population of rural areas has seriously declined. The total rural population in New Zealand has increased by approximately 6,000, but this increase is due solely to the increase in rural population in Auckland, Wellington, and, to some extent, Marlborough. In every other province the rural population has fallen.

These figures, however, must be read with extreme caution. It has been shown in the Section dealing with agriculture that there has been a relative stability in the population gainfully occupied in agriculture. The figures dealt with in this particular Section deal with total rural populations. It has also been mentioned that there is little doubt that at the 1936 census quite a considerable number of people had returned to rural areas because of the prevailing lack of employment opportunities in the urban areas. Quite a considerable number of persons belonging to rural families, who normally worked in the cities, were in 1936 back on the farms, and possibly were classified as relatives assisting, or perhaps even as gainfully occupied in rural pursuits.

This discussion really means that there is a very considerable possibility that the 1936 figures for rural population were artificially swollen. With the return of economic prosperity prior to 1939 many of these persons would have returned to their normal occupations in the city. This tendency was possibly accentuated during the war, in that some persons came from rural areas to work in war industries or industries related to war production. In addition, quite a considerable number were engaged, either directly or indirectly, in the Armed Forces. The urban populations were probably artificially swollen at this period.

Always keeping these cautions in mind, however, the figures of the decline in the rural population, particularly in the South Island, are a cause for very grave concern. In the Nelson Province the fall in the rural areas is approximately 5,800. In a small area such as this this represents a major change in population distribution. It is possible, however, that since the 1936 census was taken in March that the rural population was swollen by the presence of many seasonal workers engaged in the harvesting of fruit, with which occupation Nelson Province is primarily engaged. Since the 1945 census was taken in September this transient population would not be included. We are inclined to think that the major fall in rural population as between 1936 and 1945 in the Nelson Province can be accounted for in this way. There has, however, been some recession in the areas devoted to fruit-farming, which has been noted elsewhere. This alteration in the month of the census is of less importance in the Canterbury and Otago areas, although it must have some relevance there also.

The fall of 3,000 rural population in the Canterbury Province and 13,500 in the Otago-Southland Province is of considerable importance. It cannot be accounted for *in toto* by the recession in the intensiveness of farming in the large back-country sheep-stations. There is, during the period, some evidence of aggregation of farm lands. There is little doubt, for instance, that the emergence of tractor ploughing and header harvesting has made it possible to utilize larger farms for wheat and grain production. This must have had some important effects. We think that there is a case for a detailed investigation of the recession of the rural population in Canterbury, Otago, and Nelson in order to find out with greater accuracy than we have been able to ascertain, the real reasons for this fall in rural population.