

was emphasized during the war because of the physical impossibility of obtaining supplies from overseas, and as a consequence some large accretions of capital equipment were forthcoming. This increased capital equipment theoretically makes possible the supplying of a larger proportion of our own requirements from the products of these industries with a relative consequent decline of the imports of this type of commodity, although not necessarily a decline in total imports. But such increased capital equipment requires an increased number of operatives to maintain the output of which this equipment is capable. This phase of the shortage of labour is by far the most serious. This secular trend in industrial development really involves a fairly major potential redistribution of industrial population. It implies that there will be forthcoming for industry a larger adolescent population. The fall in the birth-rate during the depression in the early "thirties," however, is at the moment, and will for the next seven years, result in a declining number of adolescents available for industry. These factors of the increase in demand for labour which cannot at the moment be satisfied from our own population plus the decrease in the adolescent population reveal a serious situation as far as secondary industries are concerned, at least for the next seven or eight years.

In normal circumstances it would be possible to meet some of these shortages by a deliberate policy of immigration. This was the point of view put forward by practically all the institutions which appeared before us, including the Industries and Commerce Department, National Employment Service, the Federation of Labour, the Manufacturers' Federation, the Chambers of Commerce, and other witnesses. We are, however, convinced that any immediate immigration, except of single men and women selected for work in certain specified occupations, would create greater immediate problems, as far as housing is concerned, than they would solve. Provided labour and materials are available, it should be possible within the next few years to catch up with the housing shortage. At that stage very definite and urgent considerations should be given to the possibility of providing immigrants for industrial occupations. We would make the point, however, that the preliminary steps should be taken immediately. A definite immigration policy should be decided upon by the Government. We think that an investigation on the spot in England and in northern Europe should be undertaken immediately. The general conditions under which immigrants will be brought to the country, the transport arrangements, and the general housing problems should be considered straight away. There is some evidence that Australia and South Africa at least are working on this problem, although we understand that they are faced with the same housing problems as New Zealand. On the other hand, unless steps are taken to explore the possibilities and to make long-term plans, New Zealand may find itself in the position of being unable to get immigrants, or at least unable to get the better type of immigrants to suit our requirements.

IV. SEMI-PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Evidence was forthcoming to show that there was an urgent demand for operatives in coal-mines and in the timber industry. The evidence showed that at least, in so far as house-building is concerned, the shortage of timber is a serious bottleneck to effective development. This is not to state, however, that labour shortages and other material shortages are not of very great importance. We were also informed that the shortages of cement, a vital building material, were due to some extent to the shortage of coal. An effective output from these two basic industries is fundamental to practically all phases of our economic life. Apart from their influence on the housing problem, the shortages of coal are seriously interfering with the transport problem in the Dominion, and several industries are detrimentally affected. The Australian investigation, concerning which we have commented earlier, suggested that very few coal-miners were available from Great Britain or northern Europe. We feel that this is a matter which should be closely investigated on behalf of New Zealand, and, as with the problem of the provision of operatives for secondary industries, should receive the immediate attention of the Government.