

and thereafter to broaden the flow to other industries. The rise in the birth-rate will not bring relief to industry until after 1952, and even then the relief will be small at first. Without these two sources of additional labour any approach to the present problem must meanwhile be restricted. Nevertheless, given adequate information to work on, measures of alleviation can be taken which, in total effect, can do much towards taking the sharp edge off our difficulties. The employment information collected by the Department is already being applied to this end in various ways and through various Government activities. First we can deal with the location of reserve pools of labour as a means to decentralization of industry, the maintenance of a reconciliation between the levels of employment on public works and local labour shortages on surpluses, the maintenance of a balance between Government and non-Government building activities, transfers of labour to areas of acute shortage, and the expansion of accommodation facilities to assist such transfers.

90. An increase in available labour has been obtained by utilization of reserve pools of labour, mainly in the smaller towns. The Department is now able to maintain statistics of employment levels for ninety towns and cities with a population of 1,000 or more. Schedules are prepared and brought up to date every six months, showing the employment structure in each town, the incidence of labour shortages and surpluses, the seasonal surge in employment, and other relevant data. From this information it has been possible to forecast with satisfactory accuracy the amount of labour available in these different towns for various types of employment and to show the extent to which local unbalances require correction and the types of employment most likely to redress such unbalances. Numerous manufacturers have already made use of this information when forming plans for decentralization. It has also been used extensively in recruiting labour for the areas of more acute labour shortage, and particularly so in relation to the filling of accommodation in industrial camps and hostels.

91. Where industrial development follows the location of reserve pools of labour, the industrial interests of the smaller towns are broadened, greater employment opportunities are provided for the inhabitants, manufacturing activities benefit through reduced labour turnovers, and the pressure on the labour resources in the main centres is lessened. On the whole, the distribution of the country's industry and labour becomes more balanced.

92. By reduction of current public-works projects, labour has been released for other purposes. The correctness of maintaining a proper alignment between public-works activity and the general employment position is recognized throughout the world to-day. Public works of national urgency must go forward even if they draw labour from other fields of employment, but there is also the type that can be either postponed for a period or carried forward, dependent on the availability of labour. Public-works projects, however, cannot as a rule be opened up or expanded at very short notice, since they require the preparation of blue prints and estimates, the letting of contracts and sub-contracts, the formation of plans, and the accumulation of the necessary plant and materials. Under a well-administered employment policy the Government can expand public works when revenues are falling, and retrench them when revenues are rising, thus tending to reduce the surplus of labour or ease the shortage of labour when necessary.

93. For these purposes, again, the availability of adequate employment information is most important if demands for labour for public works are not to clash needlessly with the requirements of other industry. In 1946 the level of employment on public works, despite banked-up arrears of work, plus extensive new development requirements, was held at approximately 10,000 below the immediately pre-war level.

94. By measuring the seasonal surge of employment in localities and the between-season absorptive capacity of non-seasonal industries, preparations can moreover be made for the appropriate expansion or reduction of public works in different localities in line with the availability of labour.