

109. It is estimated that 46 per cent. of the Maori population is under fifteen years of age, and that at the present rate of growth the total Maori population will exceed 130,000 by 1955 and 170,000 by 1965. It is known that the opportunities for Maori school-leavers (including many with several years of secondary education) to enter full-time permanent employment are very restricted in most of the Maori populated areas.

110. Questions bound up with the problem of Maori employment include the extent to which the solution will be found in settlement of Maoris on the land, the taking of industry to the Maori populated areas, and the bringing of Maoris to the centres of European population where greater employment opportunities exist. The latter course raises the further question of provision of accommodation in such centres, and the dispelling of any prejudice against the employment of Maoris.

111. It is interesting to record that the reliability and standard of service of Maori workers in the town of Whangarei was the subject of a special survey during the past twelve months, which revealed that Maori workers in Whangarei compared well with European workers in stability, competence, and reliability. Cases to the contrary appeared to be no more prevalent amongst Maoris than they are amongst non-Maoris.

112. The broader problem of Maori employment outlined above continues to engage the attention of the Department. Apart from this broad problem of expanding employment opportunities, in alignment with increasing population, there have been various local problems requiring attention throughout the year. The employment districts mainly concerned with the placement of Maoris are Whangarei, Rotorua, and Gisborne.

(a) In the Whangarei district no serious difficulties were experienced in finding employment for Maoris. Frictional (between-job) unemployment, due to available work being largely seasonal or casual, was more noticeable in centres of Maori population, but, even so, was of brief duration in most cases.

(b) In the Rotorua district the position was somewhat more difficult, and sustained efforts were necessary to maintain continuity of work for Maori men and youths throughout the year. With the approach of winter in 1946 the difficulty of placing men enrolling for employment became more intense, and arrangements were made with the Ministry of Works for the opening-up of scheduled but hitherto deferred works projects in certain localities to absorb men who could not otherwise be placed between seasons. By September, 1946, 350 men, almost all Maoris, had been placed. Of these, 175 had been placed on public-works projects in the district, 70 had been found employment in forestry and saw-milling work, 40 had been placed on farms and in other types of employment in the district, while 45 had been placed in cheese-factories in the Taranaki district.

(c) Maori employment also presented a problem in the Gisborne employment district during the off-season. In this area large numbers of Maoris engage in seasonal occupations—particularly freezing-works and shearing—and the industrial structure of the district, lacking as it does a diversity of secondary industry, militates against the off-season absorption locally of the many workers laid off as seasonal activity diminishes. Special efforts to maintain continuity of employment for 451 men, again mainly Maoris, were necessary. The position was met during the past year by the opening-up of public-works and local-body projects, and by transfers of men to vacancies existing in other districts—mainly Wellington and Lower Hutt, where accommodation was provided in the Department's industrial workers' camps. Of the men so placed during the season, additional to men placed in local vacancies, 278 were given employment on public works, 101 on local-body works, and 72 by transfer to other districts.
