

The labour requirements of the bush sawmilling industry have remained at a high level throughout the past twelve months, the most acute demand being for skilled bush and mill workers. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the number of mills operating in the district is increasing, and no less than six new concerns have either commenced or will begin cutting shortly. Vacancies for males rose from 41 at 1st April, 1946, to 85 on 30th November, 1946, and had again fallen to 40 by 31st March, 1947.

Gisborne District

(Estimated male labour force, 14,800)

120. Farming (mainly sheep) and the related seasonal industries of freezing-works, wool-stores, wool-scouring, and dairy factories are the most important employing industries in this district, while building, transport, and servicing industries, and a small amount of manufacturing, give employment opportunities in other fields. Each year the ebb of seasonal employment creates a special problem in this district, where sufficient between-season employment is not available in other industries. The surge in seasonal employment amounts to some 600 males.

With heavy enrolments of male workers towards the close of the 1945-46 season, and with additional ex-servicemen still coming off pay and seeking employment, considerable effort was necessary to prevent winter unemployment developing. Every avenue of local employment was fully explored, and a number of the men were thus successfully placed. A number more were transferred to other districts, particularly Wellington, where many of them were accommodated in the Department's industrial workers' camps. An expansion of work on the Cook County Council's drainage scheme absorbed another 100 men, and the opening-up of limited public-works projects absorbed up to 100 more. As a result, the numbers enrolled for employment were kept within close limits. At 31st March, 1947, only 1 man and 1 woman were enrolled.

It is fairly evident that this district is in need of a greater diversity of industry to promote a better balance between seasonal and non-seasonal employment. The district has considerable reserves of available labour, including Maori labour, and from this point of view offers excellent scope to decentralizing industries, particularly those requiring male labour.

While industry is reasonably well placed for female labour there is little doubt that, were further accommodation available in Gisborne for girls living in other parts of the district, greater numbers of female workers would become available for absorption into manufacturing and other industrial enterprises in the urban area.

Napier District

(Estimated male labour force, 7,700)

121. During the period under review several new undertakings commenced operations, while further extensions to existing concerns were effected. This district offers scope for decentralizing industries, and during recent months there has been rising interest in this on the part of manufacturers from the larger centres. It seems likely that buildings used for the storage of the stock pile wool during the war years may be cleared in the near future and become available for business and industrial purposes. Furthermore, local bodies have agreed with the Town-planning Board on an area of expansion which makes provision for light and heavy industries with contiguous housing accommodation. Napier is the port for a rich pastoral district, and, as might be expected, the seasonal demand for shearers and wool-store employees is of some importance. Nearly 360 males were employed in the wool-stores last December at the peak of the season; this was the largest total of workers engaged in wool-stores in any district in New Zealand.

Notified male vacancies in the district (with some seasonal fluctuations) have shown a generally rising tendency from 41 in April, 1946, to 124 by the end of March, 1947. Female vacancies increased from 15 in April, 1946, to 117 by 31st March, 1947. These vacancies, throughout most of the year, were spread over a number of industries, with hospital vacancies as the largest group (23 all for domestic staff on 31st March, 1947). Towards the end of the year, however, there was a marked increase in demand for factory operatives, required mainly for tobacco-manufacturing.

During the months of May to August of last year, when seasonal undertakings in Hawke's Bay were at their ebb, some difficulties arose in the placement of unskilled male enrollees in between-season employment. Limited public-works jobs (scheduled but hitherto deferred) were opened up. In addition, labour was absorbed by the State Hydro-electric Department on the erection of power pylons and on the Napier Harbour breakwater and slip clearance jobs. The numbers seeking work were successfully held to a peak of only 41 in June, and by 31st March, 1947, enrolments were down to 4 males.