

(4) *Man-power*.—Statistically there has been a decided improvement in the man-power position during the past two years, as shown by the following comparative figures published by the Department of Labour and Employment for the labour strength of bush sawmills :—

|                       |    |    |    |    | Men Employed. |
|-----------------------|----|----|----|----|---------------|
| October, 1946 .. .. . | .. | .. | .. | .. | 5,280         |
| October, 1947 .. .. . | .. | .. | .. | .. | 5,800         |
| October, 1948 .. .. . | .. | .. | .. | .. | 6,370         |

This is an increase of 20 per cent., which for a period of only two years can be considered very good. However, it must not be overlooked that production has moved to levels far above all past attainments, and the demand for timber is still keen ; and that is why, despite the statistical improvement, there is still a relative shortage of men. In some districts the position is reported to be satisfactory, but on the whole there is a shortage of experienced men. Units in isolated localities, also those which can provide only sub-standard accommodation, naturally experience the greatest difficulty in staffing their operations. The sawmill housing scheme is generally acknowledged to have been of great value in attracting and retaining men. In isolated situations where housing of a good standard is already available, sawmillers are endeavouring to improve the position further by providing recreational facilities and other amenities. In certain operations working-hours are staggered to enable residents of isolated communities to visit shopping centres without loss of wages.

During the past year a considerable number of immigrants were allocated to the sawmilling industry, and, while these men cannot yet be considered skilled personnel from the viewpoint of New Zealand conditions, it is believed that those who remain in the industry will give good service. Unfortunately, a significant proportion clearly do not intend to stay beyond the expiry of their two-year term.

(5) *Accommodation*.—Good progress has been made with the erection of houses under the Sawmill Housing Scheme, 250 being erected during the year. In addition, a further 68 were in course of erection at the end of the year. Houses in occupation totalled 312 at 31st March, 1949.

Since the inception of this scheme 207 applications, covering 823 houses, have been before the Timber Production Advisory Committee. These applications have been dealt with as follows :—

| Committee's Decision.                                             | Applications. | Houses. |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------|
| (1) State Advances Corporation recommended to provide houses      | 157           | 661     |
| (2) Deferred for further consideration .. ..                      | 5             | 12      |
| (3) State Advances Corporation recommended to decline application | 45            | 150     |
| (4) Subsequently withdrawn by applicant ..                        | 7             | 18      |

At the close of the year a further 12 applications for 49 houses were under action. The 318 houses already erected under the Housing Scheme were a most welcome help in improving the standard of accommodation in the industry ; and by attracting men to the industry, the scheme has proved a very material factor in increasing timber-production. In addition to receiving assistance from the scheme, some millers have also erected good accommodation on their own account.

Assistance from the Sawmill Housing Scheme has been confined to improving accommodation for married men at mills operating in indigenous forest. The period during which the scheme was to operate is due to expire on the 1st September, 1949, and with timber-production now at a satisfactory level, and with a substantial number of houses yet to be erected, an extension of the scheme cannot be supported.