

Employment levels in gold-mining in this area are at present on the decline, having fallen from 373 in April, 1948, to 269 in April, 1949. This has been brought about by several gold-dredges ceasing activities. In general, no difficulties have arisen in placing employees in alternative avenues such as coal-mining and bush sawmilling.

Notified vacancies at the 31st March, 1949, were 185 for males and 108 for females, as compared with 191 and 93 respectively at the 31st March, 1948.

Christchurch District

In addition to possessing a wide range of secondary and tertiary industries, the Christchurch district includes a large farming area. Primary industries in this district engage the activities of just under one-fifth of the total male labour force, the remainder being distributed fairly evenly between secondary and tertiary industries. As is the case in all the other main centres, in the city areas the engineering and metalworking industries form the most important group employing male labour.

The female labour force is distributed somewhat differently. A small number of women (about one-twentieth of the female labour force) work on the land. One-third are employed in secondary industries, more than one-half of these being claimed by the textiles, clothing, and leather manufacturing group. The remainder, more than three-fifths of all women and girls employed in the district, are engaged in tertiary industries.

Vacancies.—The number of male vacancies recorded, 1,124, shows a decline of over 400 by comparison with 31st March, 1948. To some extent this is the result of a policy of more frequent checking of the position, but there has nevertheless been a decrease in demand for labour. It is reported that it has become increasingly difficult to place semi-fit persons in light employment, and that there is appearing an increasing tendency for employers to become more selective in engaging labour. Newspaper advertisements, particularly for unskilled labouring work, are stated to be evoking greater numbers of replies.

Female vacancies have fallen by over 600, due to a large extent to a review of all vacancies notified to the Department in this district. The fall has been most noticeable in manufacturing industries, and particularly clothing-manufacture, in which vacancies at 31st March, 1949, had fallen to approximately two-thirds the total at March, 1948.

On the other hand, the demand for juvenile workers shows no signs of diminution, the number of notified vacancies for boys having increased over the year by 69 and for girls by 181.

Manufacturing Industries. Despite shortages of steel and coke, the demand for both skilled and unskilled labour in the engineering and metalworking industries, and the output of these industries remains at a high level. Notified vacancies at 31st March, 1949, numbered 254, including 133 skilled, as compared with 287 at 31st March, 1948, including 163 skilled vacancies.

The rubber-manufacturing industry, which in this district employs between 800 and 900 persons, found some difficulty during the year in maintaining employment. Vacancies for 80 female workers at 31st March, 1948, had fallen by 31st March, 1949, to 16 female vacancies. Lay-offs occurred in some firms, but the surplus created was absorbed in tyre-manufacturing, a new industry for the district opened during the year.

As in other centres, the textiles, apparel, and leather manufacturing industries suffer most from the shortage of female labour. Female vacancies in woollen-mills at 31st March, 1949, numbered 141, while clothing-manufacturers required the services of more than 450 women and girls and footwear-manufacture 77. One firm of clothing-manufacturers, finding a reasonably good response from female labour in Kaiapoi, set up a branch in that town during the year.

There have been relatively few public works undertaken during the year in this district, but the Department here has been responsible for referring workers to the Lake Tekapo and Lake Pukaki public-works construction jobs.