

It is to be much regretted that so far there appears to be a certain amount of reluctance upon the part of employers (other than commercial offices) to make provision beforehand by the training of female assistants to take the place of their male employees who may be called up for active service, but doubtless this reluctance will be largely overcome as the position by a continuance of the war becomes more acutely felt, and when increasing numbers of the male staffs are compulsorily enlisted by the operation of the ballot. The Board proposes to give further attention to the question of the employment of female labour when, by reason of the shortage of men in the Dominion, it becomes necessary to close down, modify, dilute, or otherwise deal with partially essential and non-essential industries.

Home-service Men.

The Board suggested to the Government that it would be in the interests of the Dominion that certain men who are retained in camps and Defence offices upon home service should be released for service in the essential industries in which they were previously engaged, and the Board recommended that, subject to the approval and consent of the Defence authorities, any Commissioner upon receiving a special request for men required for any particular work of an essential character should be authorized through the Chairman of the Board to write to the Commandant pointing out the necessity for such men, and asking that an opportunity should be afforded to home-service men at present engaged in the camps or otherwise by the Defence Department to volunteer for such particular work; and in the event of such men volunteering, that the Defence Department should release them from their present duties for such period as they continue actively employed in the occupation for which they were released.

Shepherds.

The Board recommended to the Government that high-country shepherds and musterers working in the mountainous lands on the main backbone of the South Island should under certain circumstances be exempted from military service, as only young and vigorous men can carry on this work, and if these men are removed the sheep would have to be taken from the hilltops.

Scheelite-miners.

The Board inquired into the question of the exemption of scheelite-miners and the conditions under which the scheelite-mines of the Dominion were being worked. As a result of its recommendations to the Government it is understood that the Military Service Boards were advised to regard *bona fide* scheelite-miners as essential in view of the Imperial requirements.

Coal-miners.

Owing to a condition whereby in the Otago and Southland Districts truckers working in coal-mines were not always being exempted from military service as were the miners themselves, the Board advised the Government to suggest to all Military Service Boards that truckers should be exempted, as otherwise the coal-mines were not being worked to their fullest capacity.

Ploughmen.

The Government was recommended that, although ploughmen were considered most essential for the purpose of the production of both cereal crops and green crops for winter feed, it was not suggested that every man who claimed to be a ploughman should be exempted from military service, but merely those who systematically followed that occupation.

Refrigerating Engineers.

Inquiries were made as to the refrigerating engineers necessarily required in the freezing-works of the Dominion, and recommendations were made to the Government upon this question.

Non-exemption of Shearers.

The Board protested to the Government against the continued exemption granted by the Military Service Boards to shearers simply because of their calling, and represented that in the opinion of the Board and its advisers exemption was not necessary; further, that if a shearer was entitled to exemption, still more so was a small farmer who, besides undertaking shearing for himself and his neighbours, in the off season was managing his farm and thus adding his quota to the products of the Dominion.

Waterside Workers.—Non-exemption.

The Board's attention having been directed to the fact that at Dunedin and Port Chalmers the Military Service Board had exempted waterside workers from the operations of the Military Service Act, the Commissioners inquired fully into the matter and submitted a recommendation to the Government, which it is believed will have the effect of abolishing this anomaly.

FIRST AND SECOND DIVISION MEN, TERRITORIAL CAMPS, ETC.

Medical Examination of Second Division.

The Board went carefully into the question as to whether the medical examination of the men of the First and Second Divisions could not be collectively carried out before the ballot, and regretted to receive a reply from the Minister of Defence that owing to the scarcity of medical men he deemed such a scheme to be quite impracticable.