

application, and would specifically apply to the sons of farmers, for the reason that the farmer who has engaged labour could not be expected to free his helper for one day in each week, but the scheme can be made to serve a useful purpose under the circumstances described in the previous paragraph.

WEST COAST OF SOUTH ISLAND.

Special Local Problems.

After visiting the West Coast of the South Island we consider the difficulty there is greater than in most districts, for the reason that unemployment among the youths there is not due entirely to the fluctuations of industry, but substantially to permanent contraction in the coal-mining industry. We were informed that a large number of youths between the ages of sixteen and twenty had been dismissed when the coal-mines reduced their staffs recently, and that it was impossible for them to get any other employment in the district. In some portions of this district coal-miners are only working two days per week, and the opportunities for employment of boys have almost entirely disappeared, owing to there being no other industrial avenues available.

There are, however, on the West Coast large areas of pakihi lands, and the indications are that the development of these may later be able to be carried out on a profitable basis (We suggest that the experimental development work already undertaken by the Agriculture Department be expedited.) If such proves to be the case, the opportunity for an extension of agricultural work in that district will be greatly increased, and will provide a prospective future for many of the young men in that vicinity. Apart from this pakihi land, there is a good deal of land on the West Coast which at present is giving only poor returns, but which is yet capable of being converted into good dairying areas by modern methods of intensive farming. Most, if not all, of this partially developed country is under private ownership, but if suitable terms of leasing with a right of later purchase by the tenant or the Crown could be arranged, or some other arrangement made not involving large immediate capital expenditure, probably a considerable number of suitable areas could be obtained for settlement under the suggested scheme.

In cases where no profitable employment can be found for the boys, the local organizations dealing with the problem of unemployed boys may possibly be able to get into touch with farmers in adjacent districts in an endeavour to have them placed on farms where they will receive a training that will fit them for taking their place under any schemes of land-settlement that may be carried out on the West Coast.

Instruction in Gold Prospecting and Mining.—A suggestion made to us during our visit was that a measure of instruction could be given to certain selected lads by the School of Mines, in order that they might have more than a superficial knowledge of prospecting for gold. This matter has been referred to the Minister of Mines, who has expressed his readiness to assist in the direction of providing a course of training in the School of Mines at Reefton, Granity, or Westport. This training would give practical assistance to those boys who are prepared to take up work in connection with gold-mining in that area.

DIFFICULTY OF PLACING BOYS OF SEVENTEEN TO TWENTY YEARS OF AGE IN EMPLOYMENT.

The problem of placing boys of seventeen to twenty years of age in employment is presenting special difficulties right throughout the Dominion. We quote here a statement that has been made to us which refers in particular to Wellington:—

“I have found that there is a definite disinclination on the part of employers in Wellington to engage boys over sixteen years of age. The majority of boys on our books who are seeking employment are of the age group 16–19. We have definite evidence of many of these boys suffering from moral deterioration as the result of waiting for work, in some cases eighteen months and two years. Every day we receive applications for boys of the ages of fourteen and fifteen. The employer states that if he can get a boy at that age he can bend him to his particular way of work. We propose, as a social outreach of the recent “Youth to youth campaign,” to endeavour to form youth groups in the various suburbs with a view to furthering the interests of these older boys.”