

UNEMPLOYED YOUTHS.

Voluntary organizations in most of the larger centres have continued, during the period under review, their excellent work in the placement of unemployed boys and youths in work either of a permanent or temporary nature. These Boys' Employment Committees, whose funds are in most cases subsidized by the Unemployment Board, show a record of achievement which is highly commendable. Placements of boys and youths during the year ended 31st March, 1935, totalled approximately 5,900, of which some 3,000 were permanent and 2,900 of a temporary nature. That such placements cover a wide field is evidenced by the reports received from various committees and from the Board's officers.

In the cities, boys have been absorbed in mercantile, industrial, and professional pursuits by the efforts of committees in placing them in touch with prospective employers. Many such positions have doubtless been "made," and but for the interest displayed by the organizations referred to the employers concerned would probably not have provided vacancies. Through keeping in touch with schools and by various schemes of vocational training, committees have been enabled to select the right boys for different spheres of work. There is every reason to believe, therefore, that most so-called permanent placements and a fair proportion of temporary ones will eventually result in life vocations for many boys who would otherwise have spent the vital period of their adolescence in searching for employment only to qualify for relief work or sustenance payments on reaching the age of twenty years.

Those boys showing some desire or aptitude for rural work have been given every encouragement in obtaining suitable employment on farms. In Auckland the committee controls a training-farm where a limited number of boys are accommodated until they are proficient enough to be placed in farming occupations. The Wellington Boys' Employment Committee arranges an annual training camp in the Wairarapa, funds for which are provided by the Unemployment Board. During the period under review the Wellington Committee held its third annual camp, a total of thirty-six boys being enlisted and given practical farm-work in all branches. Lectures on various agricultural subjects were provided by the staff of the Department of Agriculture. The majority of these boys remained in camp from four to six weeks, and twenty-four eventually were placed in farm positions.

It is significant that this committee, along with others, now finds difficulty in satisfactorily filling vacancies for the employment of youths on farms. The general consensus of opinion, as expressed in reports received from all parts of the Dominion, indicates that the position of youth unemployment is becoming less acute. Certain districts still have their peculiar difficulties in regard to the placement of boys and youths in employment of a worth-while nature. In general, however, the problem now seems confined generally to those who left school during the depth of the depression.

Very little trouble seems to be experienced now in placing boys immediately they leave school, especially if they have received some secondary education. Unemployed youths from sixteen to twenty years of age may obtain employment on farms during the greater part of the year, if willing to accept such work.

Under certain minor schemes, and variations of its larger schemes, the Board itself has endeavoured to relieve distress occasioned by unemployment amongst youths. During the year, for example, further subsidies have been paid towards the training at Flock House of sons of New Zealand ex soldiers.

Altogether the assistance made available during the financial year ended 31st March, 1935, to Boys' Employment Committees, and in respect of minor schemes such as Flock House, amounted to £2,250, an increase of £1,117 over the amount similarly expended in the previous financial year.

Under Scheme 4A approximately 250 youths aged eighteen or nineteen years were given subsidized employment for varying periods during the year, while 115 boys aged sixteen years or over were assisted to undergo training on sheep-stations under Scheme No. 7.

A further development to meet unusual conditions peculiar to the West Coast district of the South Island resulted in the extension of a special gold-mining subsidy to youths aged sixteen and under twenty years. Where, owing to real necessity and especially if the fathers themselves are on relief, the Board's Mining Executive Committees consider such action warranted, youths may be permitted to join a party of experienced prospectors and receive a subsidy of 7s. 6d. per week. Up to the present some 125 youths have been so assisted, and possibly a proportion of these may find their future vocations as gold-miners. If not, they are at least tiding themselves over a difficult period and retaining their physical fitness and the will to work.

Brief mention should be made of an experimental scheme already inaugurated in the Auckland district and shortly to be tried out in Canterbury. This consists of the provision of special farm-training facilities for a limited number of boys over a period of four or five years. Selected boys who appear to have interest and capacity above the normal will be placed with farmers willing to help them to acquire a practical insight into farming operations. Special trustees, representative of the Boys' Employment Committee and the Board, have been appointed to control this scheme, the object of which is to establish a fund sufficient to enable each boy, when his period of training is finished, to be placed on a small holding or else to participate in any scheme of land-settlement which may be operative at that time.

The farmer with whom the lad is placed for training will, of course, provide food and accommodation and will be expected to pay a wage commensurate with the benefit derived by him from the lad's work and sufficient at least to meet the lad's needs in pocket-money and clothing. Such remuneration has been tentatively fixed at 5s. per week in the first year, increasing by 5s. per week each year to a maximum of £1 5s. per week in the fifth year of training. A like amount is to be found