

(ii) Bushfelling and Sawmilling

368. Perhaps no industry has been more under stress during the war years than the bushfelling and sawmilling industry. Before the war, shortages of both skilled and unskilled labour were widely felt, particularly in the bush mills in the centre of the North Island. With the great increase in the demand for timber for defence construction and other war purposes, in addition to the housing programme, the pressure on the man-power resources of the industry has greatly increased.

369. Table 49 of the report summarizes a survey undertaken at the end of 1944 and covering the man-power position in every bush and town mill of any consequence. From data provided by the managements of the 321 units surveyed, the labour force of the industry increased during 1944 from 6,561 to 6,780. Notwithstanding an inflow of 2,007 workers during the year, there was an outflow of 1,788. In addition, turnover of man-power between units in the industry affected 656 men. The conclusion invited from this is that the labour content of the industry has only been held by the most strenuous efforts of the Department and that the removal of man-power control would result in an almost immediate outflow of labour from the industry.

370. Almost all classes of workers in the industry are in short supply, but the greatest demand for labour has been in the heaviest and/or the most skilled branches—namely, bushman, with total vacancies at the end of 1944 numbering 241; sawmill hands, 208; and tram or road construction and surveying workers, 58.

371. The districts in which the greatest shortage of man-power has been experienced are naturally the districts where activity is greatest—namely, Taumarunui, 87; Rotorua, 139; Auckland, 39; Nelson, 30; Greymouth, 122; and Invercargill, 65.

372. Had no man-power become available from "Necal" personnel for direction to this industry, the total labour content of the industry would have dropped on the previous year by over 200. As it was, the total number of "Necal" men held under direction in the industry as at the end of November, 1944, was 474, which was considerably less than the target set for the industry. The remote nature of the work, the lack of accommodation, and the rigorous working conditions resulted in insufficient volunteers from the Third Division becoming available to achieve the "direction" target for the industry.

373. It must be concluded that, as the bushfelling and sawmilling industry is being called upon to play an increasingly important part in housing and reconstruction building activity, notwithstanding the cutting-out of readily accessible stands, a material expansion in the labour force of the industry must be achieved.

(iii) Coal-mining

374. Notwithstanding some expansion in the numbers of workers engaged in this industry, the man-power difficulties which the industry has presented have been almost as serious as those which have arisen in the case of the bushfelling and sawmilling industry, an industry which in some respects is similar to the coal-mining industry. Before the war there was a shortage of fit men as truckers in the Waikato and West Coast collieries. Since the outbreak of war the position both as far as miners and truckers have been concerned, but especially in the case of truckers, has become increasingly difficult as the increased demand for coal has taken place.

375. At the beginning of the war the production of coal was below the 1929 figure largely on account of the substitution of hydro-electric power for industrial purposes. As a result of this, mine development had lagged behind and many New Zealand mines are gradually approaching exhaustion, a state which has commensurately raised the cost and difficulty of extraction. The aggregate coal production for 1944 was 2,806,000 tons, as against the 1939 output of 2,342,000 tons. The estimated output for 1945 is 3,000,000 tons. A factor in the increase in production has been the opening-up of opencast mines.

376. The present labour force of the industry—viz., 5,550—is distributed throughout the various districts as follows:—

		Per Cent.
West Coast and Nelson	2,500	45
North Island: Waikato and Whangarei	2,100	38
Otago and Southland	950	17

As at the end of March of the current year there were vacancies in coal-mines for some 100-odd men. The demand at the present time is rather for truckers, who must be young and fit, than for miners, although a number of the latter could be employed in Waikato and West Coast mines. Above-ground maintenance staff, tradesmen, &c., have also been in short supply during the war years.

377. The shortage of man-power in the coal-mining industry is generally explained by the following factors:—

- (a) The usual aversion to underground work.
- (b) The shortage of fit men other than those held on appeal.
- (c) Lack of suitable accommodation, particularly at the Waikato mines.
- (d) The heavy nature of the work and industrial risks involved.

378. Before April of 1943 the Department, either through Armed Forces Appeal Boards or through District Man-power Officers, was responsible for some 200 recommendations to the Forces to release personnel whose pre-service employment had been in coal-mines. Since April of 1943 the number of men released by the Forces for employment in the industry has reached 535, of which number 393 (including 140 "Necal" personnel) were released and directed to the industry during the last twelve months.

379. As no slackening in the demand for industrial and household coal can be foreseen (at least for some years to come until hydro-electric power generation is much extended), the coalfields of the country must be expected to present a difficult man-power problem. This is especially true when it is borne in mind that the wastage among skilled miners has been high and the number of men entering the industry as youths is decreasing. An important factor to be taken into account in any