

214. In June, 1942, a Tramways Man-power Utilization Council was set up, and in the same month the declaration of essentiality in respect of tramway services was extended to cover permanent conductors. After consideration by the Utilization Council, it was decided, owing to the general male labour shortage, that vacancies for conductors were to be filled by the appointment of women, except where District Man-power Officers could be satisfied that suitable women were not available. In August, 1942, Local Tramway Man-power Utilization Committees were established in the seven centres operating tramway services.

215. By 1943 a growth in absenteeism, attributable to some extent to war conditions, was noticeable, and to assist in reducing it to a minimum small local committees, representative of workers and employers, were established. These committees did very good work and were effective in keeping within limits the wastage of man-power through this cause.

216. By mid-1944, despite the engagement of considerable numbers of women conductors, it became apparent that in at least some centres the amount of overtime required to maintain services with the staffs available was excessive. A special survey carried out in May, 1944, revealed the following average weekly hours of work in the four main centres:—

		Motormen.	Male Conductors.	Female Conductors.	Bus-drivers.
		Hr. m.	Hr. m.	Hr. m.	Hr. m.
Auckland	50 13	51 43	50 16	42 30
Wellington	53 48	54 4	42 51	52 28
Christchurch	47 21	46 33	45 51	45 58
Dunedin	43 0	44 30	45 15	46 0

217. Arising from the survey disclosures, special endeavours were made to supplement the staffs of the tramway services in Auckland and Wellington with the aim of reducing average hours of work to forty-eight hours, or six days each week. These efforts were only partially successful, owing to a high wastage of labour attributed mainly to the strain of long hours and to the fact that many of the fittest men were serving in the Forces.

218. The staffing needs of the tramway services were not limited to the traffic branch. In the difficult days of 1942 and 1943, when other works, particularly the defence programme, were claiming the highest priority, it had not been possible to maintain the normal gangs on track repair and maintenance work. In 1944 and 1945, however, owing to deterioration in the state of tracks, this work demanded attention and was accorded high priority. In Wellington, where the position was particularly acute, 70 men were directed to track-repair and maintenance work during the year ended 31st March, 1945.

219. Towards the end of 1944, owing to the extreme shortage of female labour for industry in general, and having regard to the prospect of some improvement in the male labour situation as a result of reductions in the home Forces, the recruitment of additional female conductors was discontinued. In respect of male labour, however, tramway services continued to be accorded high priority right throughout 1945, and were still experiencing staffing difficulties when the declaration of essentiality and the Tramways Industry Labour Legislation Modification Order were revoked on 9th March, 1946.

At the latter point, however, the Department had taken steps to alleviate the position in Wellington, where it was most acute (see paragraph 471).

220. Post and Telegraph Department.—This section of the transport and communications industry lost heavily in man-power, losing some 6,000 men to the Armed Forces. These losses were largely offset, however, by the engagement of some 4,000 women for clerical work, telegram, parcel, and letter delivery, driving, and light manual