

114. In addition, personnel whose services were no longer required and who could not be used to replace persons in one of the priority groups were also released. With the exception of a small number of single men retained to replace long-service personnel, members of the Sixteenth Reinforcements were demobilized immediately and placed at the disposal of Man-power Officers for direction to essential industry.

115. By 31st March, 1946, Man-power Officers had made recommendations on occupational grounds in respect of 3,715 men. At that date 2,801 of these recommendations had been approved by the Forces. The industry to gain most was the farming industry (including shearing and mustering), for which 1,333 recommendations were made, 1,074 having been approved by the Forces by 31st March, 1946. In addition, Man-power Officers made 203 recommendations on compassionate grounds, 147 of these cases having been approved by the Forces at the end of March, 1946. Table 17 of the Appendix gives further details of these recommendations.

116. While Government directed that the utmost expedition be given to the demobilization of the home Forces in accordance with the priorities outlined, it was necessary to retain key personnel to cope with the requirements of demobilization, care of equipment, pay and accounts, and other essential activities in the Forces. Taking this into account and the fact that, for the most part, general demobilization involved the return of personnel from far-distant war zones, and the clearance of equipment and accounts for all persons released, demobilization was effected very speedily. From VJ Day up to 31st March, 1946, 73,894 men and 3,360 women were demobilized. This total, 77,254, represents 82 per cent. of the strength of the Forces at VJ Day and demobilization at the rate of 10,300 a month. In the first three and a half months of demobilization 42,682 persons were released, representing about 12,195 a month from VJ Day to the end of November. Table 16 of the Appendix analyses the releases from VJ Day (15 August, 1945) to 31st March, 1946.

SECTION VII.—CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS AND DEFAULTERS

(i) The Problem of Conscientious Objection

117. Though few in number, conscientious objectors were by far the most difficult section of the population to deal with in the matter of national service. It was by no means easy to separate the spurious from the genuine or to formulate a policy which, while protecting the individual conscience, did not encourage irresponsibility.

(ii) The Treatment of Conscientious Objectors

118. The National Service Emergency Regulations 1940 established as a ground for a right of appeal that a man called up for military service conscientiously objected to serving with the Armed Forces. Appeals of this type were heard by Armed Forces Appeal Boards, from whose determination there was no right of appeal.

119. From the time balloting commenced in October, 1940, up to 31st December, 1944, 5,117 appeals were lodged on the grounds of conscientious objection. (As the only ballot called after December, 1944, covered merely inflow at age eighteen and miscellaneous "seepages," totalling 5,909 men in all, the number of appeals lodged on grounds of conscience after December was negligible.) This represents a very small percentage (1.7 per cent.) of the 306,352 men called up by ballot for military service.

120. In practice many appeals lodged on the grounds of conscientious objections were not dealt with on these grounds. Where the appellant was also the subject of an appeal on the ground of public interest or otherwise, and postponement could be granted on these grounds, it was unnecessary to hear the appeal on grounds of conscience. In this manner, 1,096 or 21 per cent. of the 5,117 appeals lodged, were adjourned *sine die*. In 944 other cases the appellant was found to be unfit for service, or the appeal was withdrawn or dismissed for want of prosecution.'