

(iii) Declarations of Essentiality

147. Under these regulations industries or individual units of industries in which it became necessary to hold or reinforce the labour content could be declared to be "essential." The first declarations were made in January, 1942, covering butter and cheese making, electric-power production and supply, the manufacture and supply of coal-gas, hospitals, the sawmilling, coal-mining and linen-flax industries, and the manufacture of munitions and Army equipment. As war production mounted and as further mobilization decreased the labour force available to industry as a whole, it became necessary to extend the coverage of declarations not only to protect actual war production, but also to protect vital ancillary production and services, until by 31st March, 1944, it was estimated that approximately 255,000 workers, representing 40 per cent. of the Dominion labour force, were employed in undertakings declared essential. From 1st April, 1944, no appreciable change took place in the extent of this coverage until the fall of Germany in May, 1945. From then onward declarations were continuously reviewed and thinned out in accordance with the Government's desire to abandon wartime controls as quickly as possible (see Section III below).

148. The objects in declaring undertakings essential were twofold. First, there was the need to hold the existing labour force on the essential jobs to the maximum extent possible. To this end no terminations of employment in such undertakings could be effected by either employer or worker until the consent of a District Man-power Officer was obtained. The second object in declaring undertakings essential was to prepare the way for the direction of labour into such concerns. There could be no point in directing labour to an employer while his other employees remained free to leave at will; nor could labour be effectively directed unless certain necessary minimum obligations applied.

149. As stated above, no terminations of employment in undertakings declared essential could be effected until the consent of a District Man-power Officer was obtained. The magnitude of this particular activity alone can be judged from the fact that from the outset of man-power control in January, 1942, to 31st March, 1946, applications dealt with by District Man-power Officers totalled 304,218, comprising 93,033 employers' applications and 211,185 workers' applications. Some 2,676 of the applications lodged by employers and 30,733 of those lodged by workers were refused.

150. District Man-power Officers, by reason of the powers of direction, coupled with their control over engagements of labour, exercised control over the subsequent work destinations of persons permitted to terminate. Tables 32, 33, and 34, of the Appendix give further details of applications and the subsequent work destinations in cases where permission to terminate was granted.

(iv) Registration for and Direction to Work of National Importance

151. The regulations made every civilian liable for direction to work of national importance, irrespective of age or sex, and enabled the registration of persons by successive age and occupational groups. Table 21 of the Appendix lists the various registration Orders and the classes of workers affected.

152. Registrations were effected on a district basis, each person being required to register with the District Man-power Officer in the district in which he or she was at the time resident, and any subsequent change of address had to be notified. On the registration of each group, male or female, the particulars shown on the registration forms were checked and the registrants subdivided into various groupings according to whether or not they were likely to be available for direction to more important work. The personal interviewing of registrants then followed. Those not found to be available for direction were kept under periodic review.