

In the following tabulation it will be observed that the percentage of female workers to all workers in factories in New Zealand is slightly lower than in Australia and much below that in the United Kingdom :—

TABLE 9—FEMALE WORKERS AS PERCENTAGE OF FACTORY WORKERS

Year.					New Zealand.	Australia.*	United Kingdom.*
					Per Cent.	Per Cent.	Per Cent.
1939	..	..	..	..	25.0	27.5	33.9
1943	..	..	..	..	31.5	30.5	43.3
1948	..	..	..	..	24.3	25.4	33.4

* Annual report, Commonwealth of Australia Tariff Board, 1948.

From the tables given in the Appendices it will be seen that the volume of production index has increased at a greater rate than the numbers of workers employed, so that productivity per head has increased. This is a simple statement which conceals many factors. As stated in Appendix D, the volume of production index in itself suffers from certain limitations and, further, regard must be paid to the considerable increase in the use of machinery.

4. PLANT, MATERIALS, ETC.

The number of machines employed in factories increased from 30,992 in 1938-39 to 73,397 in 1947-48, and horse-power employed rose from 848,000 in 1938-39 to 1,320,000 in 1947-48. In the same period the value of the investment in plant, machinery, and tools increased from £49,296,000 to £90,220,000. No doubt the marked increase in the use of machinery has been stimulated by the shortage and cost of labour. With the shortage of labour many factories have surplus machine capacity, and, in some instances production on a full-capacity basis would exceed market requirements.

The total value of fixed and floating assets employed in factories rose from £102,470,000 in 1937-38 to £186,659,000 and £222,871,000 in 1946-47 and 1947-48. The high cost of plant and materials in the last few years has undoubtedly thrown a strain on many concerns which had arranged their permanent finance pre-war. This applies to extensions and to replacements to existing plant where depreciation funds set aside on the basis of pre-war costs are to-day quite inadequate. Nevertheless ways and means have been found, and it is a fair assumption to say that the condition of plant and equipment in industry to-day is, in general, good. Industry, in fact, has substantially completed its post-war refurbishing, and a heavy drain on our overseas funds for this purpose should not recur unless exceptional circumstances arise.

Naturally, during the war years, production was hampered by the shortage of raw materials, but the position in general has improved considerably since the war, although a few raw materials are still in short supply. The value of materials, stocks in process, fuel, and supplies in 1937-38 was £15,214,000 and rose to £38,086,000 and £52,895,000 in 1946-47 and 1947-48—a most marked increase despite the falling value of money over the period. These figures do tend to confirm the general view that the raw material and stock position has improved tremendously since the war and that, in general, essential industry is well supplied with raw materials.

5. MOTIVE POWER

The difficulties encountered with the supply of coal and electric power in recent years have inevitably been upsetting to industry. The coal-supply position has improved considerably but restrictions are still being imposed on the use of electricity.

Every effort is, however, being made by the Government to meet the position by erecting new power-stations.