

Special arrangements were also made to enable Scheme No. 16 apprentices to secure technical tuition and thereby be better able to use the shorter apprenticeship term for which they were indentured to become journeymen of skill comparable with that possessed by artisans who had served the usual apprenticeship term in the same trades.

Importation of Skilled Labour.—It has for some time been evident that, unless the Dominions' force of building artisans could be speedily augmented to a considerable extent, the housing requirements of the community could not be met. The Government's housing-construction programme, together with accelerated private building activity, had virtually absorbed every available first-class building artisan, but despite this it was apparent that a housing programme of the magnitude aimed at by the Government could not be implemented without additional building artisans. Workers of the builder's labourer type were not, and are not, in short supply; indeed, many men working as carpenters in the Dominion to-day have never served a trade apprenticeship, and have graduated by experience from the ranks of the unskilled.

Scheme No. 16 will assist in eventually overcoming the shortage of carpenters and bricklayers, but its effectiveness has been limited by the unwillingness of many building contractors to engage adult apprentices and by the considerable time which must elapse before apprentices under the scheme are capable of performing the work of a journeyman.

In this situation the Government, early in this year, decided to import a number of building artisans from other parts of the Empire. To this end Mr. J. Hodgins, M.P., visited Australia and engaged building tradesmen for work on the State housing scheme. Of the 384 artisans engaged, 258 were carpenters, 23 bricklayers, 38 painters, 15 plumbers, 5 electricians, 35 plasterers, and 10 roof-tilers. In addition to the building tradesmen recruited in Australia, some hundreds of such artisans are being encouraged from England by the Government through the High Commissioner's Office in London.

These imported tradesmen have proved good workmen, and their presence in New Zealand will tend to ease the labour shortage both directly and indirectly—indirectly because employers should be able to increase the number of apprentices which they are, in accordance with the prescribed proportion of apprentices to journeymen, permitted to engage.

Skilled-labour Shortage and Industrial Expansion.—The expansion of domestic manufacturing industries is an important feature of the Government's economic administration, and local industries have been encouraged, first through tariff adjustments, and secondly through import selection, to increase their productivity. It was to be expected in these circumstances that the force of manufacturing operatives, which in past years was sufficient, would now not be so, and such has been the case.

In the boot and shoe and textile industries, to mention only two of the more important local manufacturing industries, the shortage of skilled operatives has become pronounced.

Discussions are in train between the Government and the Manufacturers' Federation on the one hand, and between the Government and the Federation of Labour on the other, with the object of devising a means of overcoming the lack of skilled workers in industry in general, and of diverting the many men in subsidized employment who are capable of being trained to jobs in industry, where they will be directly engaged in the production of consumers' goods. Meantime the State Placement Service has instituted a thorough survey of all men on public works and in subsidized employment, and where workers have been found with unused trade ability they have been reabsorbed into private industry.

IMMIGRATION ACTIVITIES.

The Placement Service has played an important role in drafting immigrant workers into employment. In respect of the building artisans directly encouraged to come to New Zealand the Service has collaborated with the Industrial Division of the Department and the Housing Construction Department in referring these workers to employment on the Government's housing scheme, and in many instances in assisting the men to procure suitable accommodation.

In addition to the particular overseas artisans engaged by the Government, increasing numbers of immigrants have sought the assistance of the State Placement Service. Besides those who have actually immigrated, many persons interested in the Dominion have communicated with the Department seeking information regarding the employment situation and the general living conditions obtaining in New Zealand. In dealing with these inquiries the Department has collated information which enables it to answer correspondents quickly and authoritatively. Often the information volunteered by intending immigrants is incomplete, and in these instances an employment questionnaire is despatched to the inquirers.

A factor which, without doubt, has prevented many correspondents from immigrating has been the widespread housing shortage in the Dominion. Immigration on a large scale cannot be feasible until the leeway in dwelling construction has been overtaken and houses are available for the immigrants and their dependants, whom later it is expected will be absorbed into the economic and social life of the Dominion.

Not all immigrants enrol at Placement Offices, but a perusal of Tables XII and XIII annexed to this report will indicate in some measure the extent to which the Dominion is becoming increasingly attractive to persons living not only in other parts of the Empire, but in all parts of the world. Table XII shows details of immigrants who enrolled with the State Placement Service during the period 22nd July to 31st December, 1938; and Table XIII gives like figures for the first quarter of the current year. During the first period (before which enrolment statistics relating to immigrants were not separately compiled) 510 immigrants sought assistance from the various offices of the State Placement Service. In the second period (January to March, 1939) notwithstanding that enrolments cover only three months as against the five covered in the first period, 779 immigrants enrolled at Placement Offices.