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In and out of one position after another. These are the industrial misfits which occur in every community. It is almost a case of the remedies being worse than the evils they cure.

Case of Conscience

But there are lighter moments, such as when a letter like this arrives. (They remembered the writer, for she wasn't so sweet when they saw her). "Now that in 30 minutes I shall be on the train for —, my conscience is pricking me, and I feel I ought to write and tell you. I've never run away from anything before, and it seems very deceitful. I don't mind telling you, I feel like a hunted criminal. I am very sorry to have to do this, but I shall report to the Manpower office immediately I get back home, and at least I shall have my family behind me."

It sounds simple, but there is a problem even there. How are you going to deal with a case like that? Demand her return? In some cases that is the correct course. In some it is better to send on her file and let her own District Manpower make the necessary move.

Employers A Problem, Too

Employers can, of course, be as difficult as employees. They have to take what labour they are given, and it doesn't always suit; so some of them ask continually for new workers and for permission to discharge others. The Manpower authority has to protect the workers as far as possible against this sort of thing.

Nor do its responsibilities end with sending out little white notices. Wellington particularly, with its rapid industrial growth, and centralisation of war departments, has a continuous manpower shortage, and there is an influx of workers from the outlying country areas. This gives rise to countless new problems, from billeting and inspecting housing conditions, and generally attending to the welfare of workers, to getting unwanted babies adopted. A special woman liaison officer in the Wellington district, attends to the needs of, and mothers a family of 300 Maori girls who are not under the compulsion of manpower, but who want to work, and have not found it easy to get the right sort of jobs and billets for themselves.

And now to return for a moment to the counter. There is a lad of perhaps 20 presenting a medical certificate. This challenge was at first widely used, but is becoming less frequent. Attached to the Department is a panel of five doctors to affirm or veto such appeals.

Trials for the Staff

Naturally situations are continually developing that put a strain on the patience of the staff; though there is humour as well as bad temper.

"It's an unpopular position," one of them told us. "You can feel fingers being pointed at you and remarks being made wherever you go."

"Do you find men or women easier to talk to?"

"Men are more docile on the whole," a senior officer told us, "although they have their difficult moments. But it must not be supposed that all, or even a large proportion, of our callers are difficult. Most co-operate with us in every way."

"Have most of the people in this office been manpowered to manpower, so to speak? How many are there of you?"

"Over 80. Some of the women have volunteered; others have been taken out of former positions. The men, most of them, have come from other Government Departments, and will return to them when their services are no longer required here."

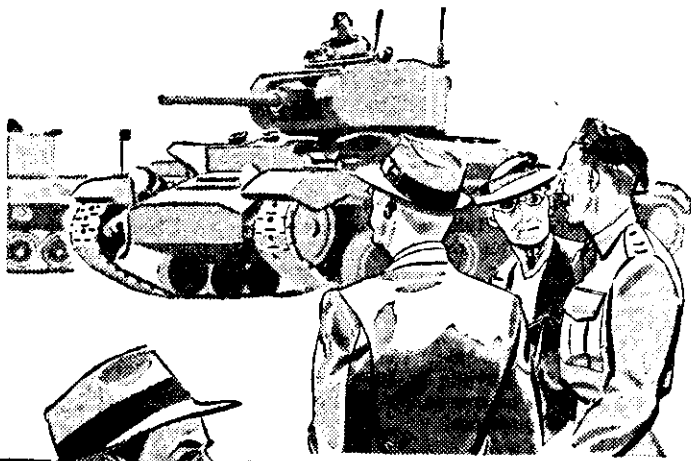
"Is it necessary to have to work from 8.0 in the morning till 8.0 at night?"

"Yes, it is at present. Up to 400 people pass through this office every day."

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