The absolute figures on which the above results are calculated are given in the next table :—

Table No. 20.—Table showing Excess of Births over Deaths in the Quinquenniums from 1871–75 to 1941–45

Period.				Excess of Births over Deaths.		
				Males.	Females.	Both Sexes.
1871–75	..	..	..	19,410	21,129	40,539
1876–80	..	..	..	30,144	32,807	62,951
1881–85	..	..	..	32,362	35,046	67,408
1886–90	..	..	..	30,781	33,544	64,325
1891–95	..	..	..	27,255	30,630	57,885
1896–1900	..	..	..	28,097	31,437	59,534
1901–05	..	..	..	32,515	36,223	68,738
1906–10	..	..	..	38,681	43,067	81,748
1911–15	..	..	..	42,323	46,682	89,005
1916–20	..	..	..	35,248	41,359	76,607
1921–25	..	..	..	41,876	44,868	86,744
1926–30	..	..	..	36,886	40,456	77,342
1931–35	..	..	..	30,715	33,237	63,952
1936–40	..	..	..	32,604	37,192	69,796
1941–45	..	..	..	44,172	47,027	91,199

It needs to be emphasized that while the absolute number of New Zealand's population has been growing, the above figures show that there is a remarkable drop in the rate of growth. The lowest point was reached in 1936, since when, and until 1939, there was a steady improvement, when the rate was higher than at any time since 1927. (This discussion omits all reference to immigration.) A rate of 7·89 per 1,000, as in 1936, meant that, although the population was increasing, the increase was not sufficient in the long run to maintain even a stationary population.

The future size of a population—ignoring for the time being the question of immigration—is related not so much to the absolute size of the present population as to the number of women at the reproductive age at any given time. At the present time fairly reliable estimates can be arrived at of the number of children of both sexes who will be born within the next few years. The number in the next generation, however, is related to the number of girl children born to-day who will survive to the reproducing age. The number of such children who will die prior to the reproducing age can be calculated reasonably accurately. If it is assumed that the fertility rate—that is, roughly, the size of families—remains the same and that there is no change in the mortality rates, the size of the next generation can be calculated with some accuracy. Such an index is called the net reproductive rate (the gross reproductive rate ignores mortality figures). The following table gives some idea of the trends in recent years :—

Table No. 21.—Table showing Net Reproductive Rate in New Zealand from 1936 to 1944

1936	..	..	0·970	1941	..	..	1·274
1937	..	..	0·990	1942	..	..	1·208
1938	..	..	1·028	1943	..	..	1·077
1939	..	..	1·073	1944	..	..	1·207
1940	..	..	1·195				

If the rate is exactly 1, then, other factors remaining constant, the same number of female children will be born in the next generation as were born in the year under review. If lower than 1, then less will be born, and hence the potential increase will be less than sufficient naturally to maintain a stationary population. If greater than 1, the population will be increasing. From 1931 to 1937 the rate was less than 1, indicating a potentially declining population. This fall was due to the economic depression. Since 1937 the rate has always been above 1, and hence prospects are brighter. Any decline, however, in the present low birth-rate in the future will give cause for serious concern. In general the figures give cause for some concern. If the experience of the