

1910.

NEW ZEALAND.

WORKERS' DWELLINGS

(REPORT ON), BY THE HON. THE MINISTER OF LABOUR.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly pursuant to Section 20 of the Workers' Dwellings Act, 1908.

IN accordance with section 20 of the Workers' Dwellings Act, 1908, I have the honour to present herewith report of the Chief Advisory Officer for Workers' Dwellings on the work done under the Act for the year ending 31st March, 1910. Three returns giving information concerning the erection of these houses, cost of building, value of land, total rent, &c., are included in this report.

J. A. MILLAR,
Minister of Labour.

SIR,— Wellington, 6th July, 1910.

I have the honour to report on the working of the Workers' Dwellings Act, 1908, during the year ending 31st March last.

In addition to the completion of the twelve houses at Lawry Settlement, Ellerslie, Auckland, referred to in last year's report, there have been seven dwellings erected at Walker Settlement, Addington, Christchurch. The latter were built by day-labour, six of them of ferro-concrete; the seventh was a wooden house already in existence on the ground, which was enlarged and renovated. Full particulars regarding these houses, as to the cost of erection, construction, &c., will be found in Return A, included with this report. The whole of the dwellings were designed by the Department's Architect, Mr. Woburn Temple, and were erected under his supervision. Although there was no actual rush of applicants for the nineteen houses referred to, as was the case at Coromandel Street, Wellington, and at Camelot Settlement, Sydenham, Christchurch, there was a good demand, and all the dwellings were leased immediately they were available.

In various parts of New Zealand the occupancy of some of the dwellings has changed—principally owing to the lessees having left the district—and in some cases weekly tenants have taken possession.

I have again to remark upon the manner in which, in the majority of cases, the lessees or tenants have taken care of and made improvements on their properties.

Up to the 31st March, 1910, 127 houses have been erected and finished under the Act, out of which nine houses were unoccupied on the 31st March—namely, eight at Heretaunga* Settlement, Petone, and one at Windle Settlement, Dunedin. In the case of Petone there is some difficulty in the disposal or letting of the dwellings, not only on account of the distance from the City of Wellington, but also from the fact that the settlement is twenty minutes' walk from the Petone Railway-station, so that the settlement may be said to be limited to Petone workers. We can hardly expect to dispose of these dwellings satisfactorily unless some means are found for getting to and from the settlement.

As already indicated, a further trial of ferro-concrete for workers' dwellings was made at the Walker Settlement, Addington, the result of which goes to bear out my remarks of last year; and, as the supply of suitable material is practically unlimited in different parts of New Zealand, I am of the opinion that the use of ferro-concrete in preference to wood should be encouraged as much as possible. The very slight extra cost (approximately £6 per dwelling) is more than compensated for by the extra durability, saving in cost of maintenance and insurance, besides the fact that the dwellings are warmer, more weather-proof (a matter about which there is a general complaint throughout New Zealand), and are less sensitive generally to external influences. There may be some difficulty in bringing about this improvement, partly because builders usually hesitate to alter their methods of building, and partly on account of the impression that concrete houses are damp. This impression is, no doubt, due to the fact that in the past concrete buildings have been erected without a proper damp-course; while the houses built by the Department have such provision made, and are, in consequence, as dry as any wooden house. As to the appearance of concrete houses, there is nothing to prevent their being made as ornate as wooden houses, either by the ornamentation of the concrete itself or by wood facings. There remains one slight disadvantage in connection with concrete houses—namely, the fact that they take a little longer in erection.

The cost of the erection of a worker's dwelling is arrived at as follows: Cost of erection, including fencing, drainage, and water-supply; charge for administration (erection by Labour Department); charge for administration (letting, maintenance, &c., by Lands Department); and contingencies.

* Since the 31st March three of these houses have been let.