

APPENDIX B.

YEARLY STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT HON. THE MINISTER OF LABOUR PURSUANT TO SECTION 18 OF THE WORKERS' DWELLINGS ACT, 1910.

In pursuance of section 18 of the Workers' Dwellings Act, 1910, I have the honour to present the following statement of the Superintendent of Workers' Dwellings relating to the operations of the Act during the year ending 31st March, 1916.

W. F. MASSEY,
Minister of Labour.

DWELLINGS ERECTED DURING THE YEAR.

There were 256 applications dealt with by the Workers' Dwellings Board during the year, and the erection of 100 dwellings was authorized. (For particulars of the dwellings erected see Table (d) below.) It will be seen that the total number of dwellings provided to 31st March, 1916 (including 37 building on that date) is 590; 38 additional dwellings are also shortly to be commenced. Of the total number, 112 are allocated to Wellington (and Petone), and 38 are on rural allotments.

In every case the erection of dwellings during the past year has been proceeded with only when the cost has approximated that of normal times. As the prices of most building-materials have considerably increased since the war began, such a course has not been an easy one. In this connection it may be worthy of note that the Department is able to carry out its work at a cheap rate by reason of the saving effected in various directions—viz., in the purchase of sections and the erection of dwellings in convenient groups, in the very low legal charges, small fees to cover Architect's expenses, &c.

The year's work involved the purchase of small areas of land at Whakatane (Bay of Plenty), three sections; Te Awamutu (Waikato), six sections; Marton, six sections; Carterton, 10 acres; and Wellington, twenty-two sections. Of the twenty-two sections purchased in Wellington, eleven will shortly be built upon. An additional number of Wellington applications for consideration on this year's building programme is already in hand, and, in view of the complaints that are constantly made as to the increases in rentals and of the unsatisfied demand for dwellings of from four to six rooms in the city and suburbs of Wellington, it is hoped that funds will permit of the erection of an additional number at an early date. Care will again be necessary, as during the past year, to build only when it can be done at reasonable cost.

SALE OF LAND NOT REQUIRED FOR WORKERS' DWELLINGS.

As intimated in last year's report, land not required for workers' dwellings is available for purchase under section 4 of the Act of 1914, and in terms of this provision fifty-one sections have been disposed of during the year. The Department of Lands and Survey has also been advised that, to assist returned soldiers, applications under this section of the Act for land held by the Department will receive especial consideration.

PERIODICAL INSPECTION OF WORKERS' DWELLINGS.

In 1914 an annual inspection of all workers' dwellings was instituted in order to see that the occupants are taking due care of their homes. All dwellings have accordingly again been inspected by departmental officers, whose reports show that, with very few exceptions, the dwellings occupied by purchasers have been satisfactorily maintained. Where such was not the case notices have been issued to effect the repairs deemed necessary. It is pleasing to state that in quite a number of cases various improvements—not only to the dwellings themselves, but also in the laying-out of well-kept gardens—have been made, and letters of commendation have been sent to the occupants. It is noticeable that the dwellings built for purchasers (under the present Act, passed in 1910) are better cared for by the occupants than those built for tenants under the previous Act of 1905.

Special attention has, in the inspection, been given to the dwellings on rural allotments, and it is found that generally good use is being made of the areas of land available; the land is in some instances used for market-gardening and fruit-culture, and in others for grazing. One case calls for special mention—viz., a 5-acre allotment at Willowbridge, near Waimate, where every available portion of the land is under cultivation, including a hothouse, 85 ft. by 25 ft., which the purchaser (Mr. A. T. Woodhead) has erected in his spare time. This industrious worker hopes in the course of time by means of close cultivation to secure an independent living from this small area. Cases like this are deserving of every encouragement and assistance.