

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 Deputy Superintendent of Workers' Dwellings relating to the operations of the Act during the year ending 31st March, 1917.

W. F. MASSEY,
Minister of Labour.

DWELLINGS ERECTED DURING THE YEAR.

The number of workers' dwellings erected during the year was sixty-five (see Table (b) below). Of this number thirty-seven were in the course of erection on the 31st March, 1916. Owing to the largely increased cost of building-material and the difficulty experienced in obtaining tenders at a reasonable figure, it was found necessary to considerably curtail the programme which was laid down at the beginning of the year; in many instances the tenders received were so high as to be quite prohibitive, and it was deemed unwise in the interests of the applicants themselves to accept them and erect the dwellings. Whereas two or three years ago a four-roomed dwelling in wood cost about £360 and a five-roomed dwelling about £450, the cost of similar houses at the present time would be about £460 and £560 respectively; consequently only twenty-eight dwellings were erected instead of 100, as arranged for in the original programme. Since the 31st March, 1917 (in addition to eleven houses in course of erection at that date) arrangements have been made for the erection of twelve more dwellings. Of these, three are for Wellington (Petone), three for Masterton, four for New Plymouth, and two for Patea. There is still a large demand for workers' dwellings, especially in the Wellington District. The Board will, however, as in the past, exercise care, and only build when the cost is reasonable. A dwelling was purchased at Kilbirnie, Wellington, which was chosen by an approved applicant and inspected by an officer of the Department, who reported that it was suitable for a worker's dwelling.

SALE OF LAND NOT REQUIRED FOR WORKERS' DWELLINGS.

During the year four sections of land not required for workers' dwellings have been disposed of under section 4 of the Act of 1914.

INSPECTION OF WORKERS' DWELLINGS.

All the workers' dwellings throughout the Dominion have again been inspected by officers of the Department in accordance with the scheme instituted in 1914, in order to ascertain that purchasers and tenants were taking proper care of their dwellings, and it is most satisfactory to note that with very few exceptions the reports disclose that occupants not only take great care of, but also sufficient interest and pride in, their houses and sections—that in numerous instances improvements, such as laying-out of gardens and planting of trees and shrubs, have been effected.

COLLECTION OF INSTALMENTS AND RENTS.

The work of the Department in connection with the collection of rents and instalments shows a very satisfactory result, especially when the fact is taken into consideration that all classes of the community find it increasingly difficult owing to the abnormal conditions existing at the present time, to make both ends meet. The following table for the last three years (since the Department took over the collection from the Public Trust Department) will show clearly the improvement made in the reduction of arrears:—

Date.	Number of Dwellings.	Arrears.			Average Arrears per Dwelling.		
		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
31st March, 1915	471	1,215	11	5	2	11	8
31st March, 1916	553	1,251	12	8	2	5	3
31st March, 1917	619*	1,013	11	11	1	12	9

* Ten dwellings (six at Te Awamutu and four at Marton) were completed, and purchasers only took possession during the last week in March.

As in former years, a considerable sum was paid off the arrears during the early part of April.