

*Construction.*

The almost universal practice of building in wood—which in many cases consists of a large proportion of inferior timber—should be improved upon as far as practicable. The life of a wooden building is estimated at forty years, which means the complete rebuilding of all such houses every forty years. Encouragement should therefore be given to build in brick, concrete, or other durable material.

The Committee therefore recommends that a comprehensive scheme of housing construction be undertaken on the following lines :—

Brick, concrete, or other durable material to be used wherever possible, except in cases where it is probable that the sites will be required for other purposes within a period of thirty-five or forty years, or in industries such as coal-mines that may be worked out within a limited time. Considerations of economy should not be permitted to bring the dwellings below a reasonable minimum standard of accommodation, attractiveness of design, sanitation, and convenience.

*National Housing Department.*

The Committee recommends that a national Housing Department be set up, to be under the control of a Minister of the Crown and administered by a Commissioner, and two Associate Commissioners who should be men of business experience with a knowledge of the building trade. Power should be given to acquire land and buildings compulsorily, to purchase land, make roads, acquire and carry on sawmills and joinery-works; to purchase and import supplies, purchase plant, manufacture articles required for the dwellings, &c.; in short, the Commissioners should have wide powers to push on vigorously and in a businesslike way the work of providing the much-needed houses. This would involve vesting in the Housing Department under the Commissioners the powers at present exercised by the Workers' Dwellings Branch of the Labour Department. The necessity for a progressive housing scheme on national lines is so pronounced and calls for such vigorous execution that the machinery of any existing Department could not reasonably be expected to cope with it.

*Ways and Means.*

Ample funds must be provided. The Committee recommends that an amount up to £2,000,000 be made available, to be drawn on by the Commissioners as required, and to be supplied to them at 4 per cent. interest, the difference between this rate and the rate which the Government pays for the money, together with the cost of administration of the Department, to be borne by the State. The sum indicated will provide about three thousand additional houses, accommodating perhaps fifteen thousand people, which will to some extent remove the crushing disabilities at present existing.

*National Housing Scheme.*

The houses provided under the national scheme should be available for preference to men having incomes below £300, with an additional allowance of £25 per child over three in number. Where the houses are let, the rental basis should be 5 per cent. plus rates. In the cases of houses sold, the selling-price should be the actual cost plus overhead charges. Liberal terms should be given, on a 5-per-cent. interest basis. Where possible the houses should be erected in numbers of ten or more; sufficient land should be provided, where possible, for a garden; and trams, railways, or other quick means of transit should be an important factor.

*Local Bodies' Building Schemes.*

The Committee further recommends that local bodies, including Harbour Boards, be empowered, in conjunction with the State, to initiate and carry into effect local housing schemes. Where building schemes are considered desirable or necessary within the jurisdiction of any local body, such local body shall be