

N.Z. BUILDING PROGRESS

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Architecture, Building, Engineering and Industries

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Editorial Comment

Housing Schemes

If landlords made the profits they are accused of making by people who only pay rent, or owe it, we ought to be witnessing a huge building boom in Wellington. There, according to law of supply and demand, is the place to put money into bricks and mortar. But it cannot be said that residential work is maintaining the builders and architects of the capital city. Houses are scarce and dear, and the demand, even at high prices, is far from satisfied. A tenants' association has been started to deal with exacting landlords, and the all-embracing power of the State invoked to help people out of their difficulties. A small number of workers' dwellings is being put in hand by the Labour Department, in connection with its excellent scheme for financing working men into their own homes, but this is a trifling palliative. The working man, like everyone else, does not like to use up too much of daylight hours in getting to and from his work. Business men whose time is counted above Arbitration Court rates, cheerfully pay high rates and buy expensive residence sites as close to the heart of the city as possible. "Time is money," they argue, and they decline to depend on trams, trains, and similar uncomfortable methods of travelling in "rush" hours. A ten minutes' walk is better than a half hour's experience of the inside of a crowded public vehicle. While we hear much of the woes of the working man—honest, well-founded complaints of men who have to spend at least one-third of their time earning enough to pay rent—little attention is paid to the clerical and business class, which is even worse off. Family life is becoming a negative quantity in our cities, "home influence" a mere phrase to most of the rising generation. Here is a social problem calling for careful attention. Land is dear around the business centres, but it is not used to best advantage. It may sound heretical to New Zealand ears, but the day of the little garden patch for every city home is passing. We could get better living conditions by building spacious blocks of flats, economising ground-space sufficient to permit of a pleasing garden setting, a garden which will not be shut in by close fences, but be a joy to all who pass by. Flats constitute a