

While admitting that economic considerations are very important in this regard, we do not ignore the fact that social considerations frequently tend to cause a limitation of families. The emancipation of women and the desire of women in general to take a larger part in the social and economic life of the community does definitely form a reason for the restriction in the size of families. Some witnesses suggested that the matter of domestic help was one of the reasons for family restrictions. We cannot think that this is a really important factor as far as the majority are concerned. Admittedly, in certain of the more well-to-do families the absence of domestic help is important, but domestic help has not been common in New Zealand as far as the rank and file of the community are concerned, and consequently its absence cannot materially affect the number of children.

B. THE MARRIAGE-RATE

There has been some suggestion that one of the causes of a declining population in New Zealand has been the tendency for the marriage-rate to decline. Statistics have been given to show that, at least from the end of the 1914-18 war onward, the rate has been remarkably steady, except that during the depression years of 1931, 1932, and 1933 it was very low, while during the years 1938, 1939, and 1940 it was very high. The explanation is probably simple, in that the depression did definitely restrict the possibility of marriage, while the returning prosperity in 1938 and 1939 did make it possible for more marriages to be consummated. The high figures in 1940 and again in 1944 and 1945 are probably due to causes related to the war. Actually there has been little change over a long period in average age of marriage. The tendency has been, if anything, downwards. The average age of mothers at the birth of their first child has been very steady for over thirty years, although there has been some tendency for the marriage to have been in existence longer before the first child was born. In 1914, 35.89 per cent. of the first births were to women between twenty and twenty-five years of age; in 1943, 42.53 per cent. of the first births were to women in this age-group. There was, however, a fairly substantial drop in the number of first births to women over thirty years of age. Hence, the reason for the decline in the birth-rate cannot be found in any tendency to postpone marriage or for a smaller proportion of the community to be married. The marriage-rate, which was 7.28 in 1900, was 7.85 in 1925, 6.81 in 1932, and had risen to 10.09 in 1938, and even during the war was 7.53 in 1943. Since there is no tendency for the marriage-rate to fall, but, rather, for it to increase, it is obvious that the fall in the birth-rate is to be explained in terms of the tendency to limit the size of families. No adequate statistics over a long period are available in this regard. It would seem, however, that the size of families has fallen from over 3 children just before the 1914-18 war, to under 2½ of recent years. The tendency since 1943, however, has been in an upward direction, for the reasons given earlier.

II. THE PROBLEM OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

In a previous section of this report it was pointed out that the scope for geographical expansion of agriculture in New Zealand was definitely limited. Practically all of the available and suitable land has been taken up. Figures supplied by the Lands and Survey Department give an estimate of 244,000 acres of new land only available for new settlement in the immediate future. The Rehabilitation Department in evidence stated that approximately 8,000 unit properties will be required to settle ex-servicemen who are or will be desirous of acquiring properties of their own. The Lands Department estimate that of this 8,000, some 3,000 men will establish themselves on farms with or without financial aid, presumably by buying existing farms. This category will not mean increased settlement. The balance, 5,000, will in part mean increased settlement. For this 5,000 the Lands Department estimate that it will have to provide 1,200,000 acres of land, either by acquisition of occupied holdings capable of subdivision or by the development of undeveloped Crown lands. The actual land purchased to 30th April, 1946, totals 277,000 acres, of which 100,000 acres has been settled. In addition, there are the land-