

The following table, supplied by the Employment Department, shows the number of workmen employed in connection with the State Housing projects since March, 1939 :—

Table No. 122.—Table showing Number of Workmen employed either directly by, or under Contract to, the Housing Construction Department, from March, 1939, to March, 1946

March, 1939 ..	..	5,340	March, 1943 ..	..	1,089
September, 1939 ..	..	4,385	September, 1943 ..	..	2,180
March, 1940 ..	..	5,085	March, 1944 ..	..	3,192
September, 1940 ..	..	4,420	September, 1944 ..	..	4,009
March, 1941 ..	..	3,879	March, 1945 ..	..	3,645
September, 1941 ..	..	3,478	September, 1945 ..	..	4,026
March, 1942 ..	..	1,842	March, 1946 ..	..	4,742
September, 1942 ..	..	873			

The table shows in marked fashion the falling-off of housing construction during the war, culminating in 1942, when defence construction works were at their height. The increase in numbers since that date is indicative of the increasing importance attached to housing. At the present moment (July, 1946) the number engaged in housing activities is approximately equal to that of March, 1940.

As to future demand for houses—assuming no immigration—this will depend largely on the number of marriages. This in turn is related to the birth-rate from twenty to thirty years previously. In other words, most people marrying in 1945 were born between 1916 and 1926. The following table is of interest in this regard :—

Table No. 123.—Table showing Number of Live Births from 1920 to 1935 (excluding Maoris)

Year of Birth.	Number.	Year of Birth.	Number.
1920	29,921	1928	27,200
1921	28,567	1929	26,747
1922	29,006	1930	26,797
1923	27,967	1931	26,622
1924	28,014	1932	24,884
1925	28,153	1933	24,334
1926	28,473	1934	24,322
1927	27,881	1935	23,965

It will be observed that in the ten years from 1925 to 1935 there is a gradual falling off in the number of births, indicating that in the next ten years a falling off in the number of marriages can be expected. While this falling off will give some relief to the potential housing demands, it will not give any relief to existing housing shortages.

Other things being equal, "It will be seen that any large-scale immigration policy, if implemented during the next two or three years, is likely to further embarrass the housing situation in this country. We must expect to provide, say, one house for every 3.7 immigrants, unless they are children who might be housed elsewhere." The Director continues: "At the point where the marriage-rate suddenly declines will approximately be the opportune time for bringing in further immigrants."

One further point in the evidence of the Director of Housing Construction is worthy of mention. He recommended that steps be taken to encourage the subdivision of large houses no longer fully occupied. Many such houses could be converted into two or more flats. We are not concerned to comment in detail on the financial aspects of the proposition, but, since we believe that adequate housing is a fundamental prerequisite of any policy to encourage a population increase, we think that every step possible should be taken to explore all available avenues for meeting the present shortage.