

The question naturally arises as to whether this increase due to an ageing population will continue. The problem is very closely linked with the question of the birth and the death rates, and obviously any increase in the size of the population due to immigration. In regard to this last question, the age of immigrants will have a very material effect.

As stated earlier, however, New Zealand may be fast approaching a stage when its age-distribution will become relatively stable. The following table gives some idea of the percentage of the population, in various countries, of the age of sixty years and over :—

Table No. 124.—Table showing the Percentage of Population, in various Countries, over the Age of Sixty Years

New Zealand—				Italy	11·1
(a) 1944	13·6			Australia	9·9
(b) 1936	10·5			Finland	9·4
France	14·7			Canada	8·4
Sweden	13·2			United States of America	8·4
England and Wales	12·9			Yugoslavia	8·2
Scotland	12·3			*Union of South Africa ..	7·9
Switzerland	12·2			Poland	7·8
Norway	12·0			Japan	7·4
Denmark	11·2				

* European population only

Figures for New Zealand, 1936 and 1944. United States of America, Finland, and Japan, 1930. Canada, Poland, and Yugoslavia, 1931. Australia, 1933. Norway, Denmark, and France, 1935. England and Wales, Union of South Africa, Sweden, and Italy, 1936. Scotland and Switzerland, 1937.

The table illustrates to some extent the points made earlier—namely, that the proportion of persons over sixty years of age in New Zealand is more nearly equivalent to many of the older countries of the world than even such places as South Africa, Canada, or Australia. Very tentatively, therefore, we put forward the opinion that this problem of ageing population will be of less importance in the future than in the past. New Zealand has definitely passed the pioneering stage and is entering a more stable period of its population growth. If, however, the expectation of life in New Zealand, which is already the highest in the world, were to increase materially, this contention may be negated.

Turning next to the problem of capital expenditure, the following table shows at various dates from 1900 to 1944 the total public debt and the indebtedness per head :—

Table No. 125.—Table showing Gross Indebtedness of General Government and Debt per Head as at various Dates from 1900 to 1944

As at 31st March,					Total.	Per Head of Population.
					£	£ s. d.
1900	..	..	..	..	47,874,452	59 19 2
1905	..	..	..	..	59,912,000	65 19 6
1910	..	..	..	..	74,890,645	72 6 10
1915	..	..	..	..	100,059,910	86 19 7
1920	..	..	..	..	201,170,755	162 12 9
1925	..	..	..	..	227,814,647	165 2 11
1930	..	..	..	..	267,383,343	179 11 0
1935	..	..	..	..	280,581,217	179 14 11
1939	..	..	..	..	303,970,272	187 1 10
1940	..	..	..	..	322,907,536	196 15 9
1944	..	..	..	..	566,494,017	344 12 1 (£N.Z.)