

In view of the potential industrial development in the Dominion, we think that urgent attention should be given to the problem of the proper layout of the new residential areas. Many of the municipalities in the Dominion are very lax in accepting their responsibilities in the preparation of an adequate town plan. We desire to commend the work of the Ministry of Works both in its Town-planning Division and in its Housing Division in this direction, but unless the local authorities also accept their responsibilities it is possible that the good work which is being done by the Ministry of Works may be negatived. In the report of the Local Government Committee presented to Parliament last year this point was emphasized, and we desire to again draw attention to the necessity for pushing on with this most necessary work.

IX. RESEARCH INTO POPULATION PROBLEMS

It became very evident during the course of our examination of various departmental witnesses that each Department was working to its own ideas of potential population development in the Dominion. Not only were there different concepts as to the ultimate total population, but generally there were different ideas as to the desirable internal distribution of the population and as to the general employment policies which should be adopted. For instance, in another Section of this report we discuss at some length the problem of decentralization, particularly of secondary industries. Such decentralization of industry implies, naturally, some decentralization of population, and this in turn involves long-term thinking in relation to housing policies, transport policies, public-works policies, and the like. The Employment Department presented some very adequate statistics as to present employment possibilities. It is obvious, however, that there will need to be a very close co-ordination between the Industries and Commerce Department, responsible as it is for industrial development, and the Employment Department. Both of these, in turn, will need adequate information regarding the financial structure as it affects overseas funds. In the matter of land-settlement, it is obvious that some detailed investigations are necessary as to the absorptive capacity of land in the Dominion in terms of agricultural population.

A careful study of our report will show that there is a vital need for a reliable and continuous overall study of population policies in the future. The Government should be in a position to inform all Departments as to what this policy is, particularly in regard to the development of the economic and social life of the Dominion. This naturally involves some definite views as to immigration. We therefore recommend that there be set up at an early date a small Secretariat attached directly to the Cabinet, charged with the continuous study of population problems with a view to devising a long-term overall policy for the guidance of Departments. There is an evident lack of co-ordination on many of these policies. While we mention particularly the problem of population, our investigations have shown that in several other fields Departments need some definite overall guidance as to certain fundamental factors of New Zealand's economy and as to policies which are to be adopted in the future. Departments should not be placed in the position of having to make guesses as to general trends. We do not think this function can be adequately performed by any one Department. What is needed is some small organization outside the normal departmental structure and attached to the Cabinet, through the Prime Minister, which would act as an Economic Secretariat.
