

SECTION VI.—IMMIGRATION

29. In December, 1945, the House of Representatives set up a Select Committee of its members to consider ways and means of increasing the population of the Dominion. After hearing written and oral evidence from a large number of organizations, Government Departments (including this Department), and individuals, the Committee presented its report in September, 1946. The Committee recommended that no policy of wholesale immigration should be embarked on by New Zealand at the present time or in the immediate future, but that immigration should be of the selective type in accordance with the immigrants' occupational aptitudes for industrial work and the availability of vacancies and accommodation. In view of the serious shortages of housing accommodation it was recommended that at the commencement preference should be given to single people.

30. In view of the acute financial difficulties of Great Britain it was decided that the full costs of bringing assisted immigrants to the Dominion should be met by New Zealand. In brief, the assisted passage scheme will thus be :—

(1) Full payment by the Dominion of transport costs from the United Kingdom to New Zealand of all persons selected, whether civilian or ex-service personnel, the only exception being that civilians will be required to contribute £10 towards the cost of their passage.

(2) Selection will be made by the High Commissioner in London, and will, in the initial stages, be confined to physically fit single persons between the ages of twenty and thirty-five who are experienced in or suitable for employment in certain specified occupations of an essential nature.

(3) Such assisted immigrants will be required to sign an agreement to remain in the occupation for which they volunteered, for a period of two years, failing which the full fares will be recoverable from them.

(4) First priority will be given to staff for general, mental, and maternity hospitals.

31. The number of berths which will be available for allocation by the High Commissioner under the proposed immigration scheme, on the basis of present estimates of the shipping available, will be 1,500 from June to December, 1947, 3,500 in 1948, and 4,600 in 1949.

32. Whatever numbers of immigrants may be considered desirable and whatever schemes of encouragement, selection, or assistance are proposed, there remains the limiting factor of the physical means of transporting people here. In addition to the loss of shipping by enemy action during the war, a large proportion of vessels remaining afloat require extensive overhaul, re-engining, and conversion from troop to civilian passenger accommodation. As space in the shipyards becomes available in Great Britain the ships will be withdrawn from service.

33. To deal more adequately with the increasing volume of inquiries a separate division of the Department was set up, and experienced officers have been sent to join the High Commissioner's Office in London for the purpose of establishing an Immigration Branch in that Office and to ensure that accurate information on employment opportunities, living-conditions, &c., is made available to prospective settlers. This Branch will also deal with the administration, at that end, of any assisted immigration scheme that may be introduced. It is appropriate to record here that the number of inquiries, either by personal calls or by letter, received at New Zealand House from prospective immigrants to New Zealand averages two thousand per week.

34. The increasing numbers of inquiries being received, both in New Zealand and at the Office of the High Commissioner for New Zealand in London, warranted the preparation of a booklet which would give prospective settlers as accurate a picture as possible of life in New Zealand. Accordingly an illustrated booklet of thirty-two pages entitled "Prospects of Settlement in New Zealand" was printed and supplies despatched to overseas Government offices in Great Britain, Australia, South Africa, Canada, United States of America and India for distribution to inquirers. In addition, a number of booklets have been prepared on employment prospects in general and mental hospitals and in coal-mining, building and construction, sawmilling, footwear and clothing manufacture, woollen, knitting, and hosiery mills, engineering and metal trades, hotels, restaurants, and other domestic work. These pamphlets give prospective immigrants a broad outline of the industry, describe what classes of work are included, standards of