

These works centres have not only proved beneficial to the field organization in providing an efficient co-ordination of supplies to building operations, but have also opened up worth-while trade employment avenues and training opportunities for Maori youths. In addition to the existing works and stores depots, a departmental bulk store and timber-yard is being developed at Wairoa in conjunction with the new sub-office establishment.

EMPLOYMENT AND FIELD PERSONNEL

The present departmental building supervisory staff comprises 1 District Building Supervisor, 10 Building Supervisors, and 15 Overseers.

Reorganization proposals for the expansion of the building division have been completed and a number of immediate appointments recommended not only to relieve present field staff of the pressure of expanding works operations, but also to permit more drive being given to overcoming the Maori housing problem.

These proposals make provision for District Supervisors to give more time to adequate field control and organization of works activities in each district, for zonal Supervisors for more adequate control and supervision of works throughout sub-districts, for Maintenance Inspectors to give more concentrated attention to the important aspect of security maintenance, and for technical assistants to give general assistance to supervisors in preparation of works and routine technical duties connected with building operations.

The number of departmental workmen, other than classified permanent and temporary employees, engaged with the building organization as at 31st March, 1949, was 413, and in addition there were 113 contractors and sub-contractors. These figures include 62 Maori building units and 10 Maori contractors and sub-contractors.

PLAN SERVICE

The "standard" plan service has been constantly under revision for the purpose of improving the design and appointment of houses to meet varying personal requirements and circumstances of applicants, ranging from pensioners' cottages to large family homes in both town and rural areas. Indicative of the increasing home-consciousness of the Maori people, it has been noticed that many applicants are submitting their own plans for approval, a matter which is worthy of encouragement. It is evident, however, that a wider range of plans is necessary to meet the varying requirements mentioned above, and to this end steps are being taken to overhaul the present available plans and to provide alternative designs for each plan.

The provisions enabling the extension of mortgage terms to thirty years, where mortgagors so desire, has had the effect of permitting many more Maori applicants to undertake loan commitments, whilst the Special Housing Fund procedure providing for supplementary interest-free loans has enabled the Department to assist many families who are in dire need to obtain homes where previously no opportunity existed.

RENTAL HOUSING

Negotiations with the State Advances Corporation and the Housing Construction Department have resulted in the adoption of a definite plan for the provision of rental housing for the Maori people.

The movement of the Maori people from the country to the more closely settled industrial areas has posed a problem of some national significance. Obviously the Maori must be encouraged to earn his own living, and as the pa areas offer few opportunities they are forced to seek work in the cities and towns, where housing is a major problem.

Surveys have been conducted, and it has been found that the bulk of the urban and semi-rural industrial Maori population is living in overcrowded and mainly slum conditions.