

PALMERSTON NORTH.

The Loughnan Settlement (34 acres), near Terrace End Railway-station, Palmerston North, which is already set apart for workers' dwellings, is suitable for the purpose, and applications for dwellings to be erected thereon will be considered as early as possible.

Negotiations are also proceeding for the purchase or setting-apart of suitable land in Wanganui, Timaru, Invercargill, and various other towns. Some delay in dealing with applications for dwellings will necessarily take place in such localities pending the completion of the negotiations for land.

Under the provisions of the new Act the control of workers' dwellings is now vested entirely in the Labour Department. Formerly the Department had jurisdiction only up to the erection of the dwellings, when the same were handed over to the Lands Department for disposal. This dual control is now done away with, and the result should be the establishment of more uniformity and economy of administration.

The Act provides for the disposal of workers' dwellings by purchase, lease, or tenancy, but it has been decided to give preference to applications for purchase. The purchase of a worker's dwelling is effected by a small deposit (of £10), the balance payable in instalments computed at the rate of 7 per cent.—viz., 5 per cent. for interest, the balance for payment of principal, which under the schedule will be paid off in twenty-five years and a half. Thus, in the case of a six-roomed dwelling in Christchurch costing £560 (including section), the payments due will be £38 10s. per year, or approximately 15s. per week, which with rates and fire insurance will cost a total of about 16s. 6d. per week. It is proposed to offer the purchase under the same conditions to the lessees and tenants of the 126 existing dwellings.

Arrangements have been made with the Government Life Insurance Department by which, under a special scale any purchaser of a worker's dwelling may insure his life for as nearly as practicable the amount that may be owing on his dwelling at the time of his death, should such occur. Thus, by the payment of 2s. 9d. per week, a purchaser of a dwelling costing £560, if he is thirty years of age, would insure the payment of the balance owing on his dwelling at any time that his death might occur. The amount of insurance effected is actually greater than the amount owing from time to time, it being the nearest practical sum; and, in the case of death, the balance of the insurance-money, after paying the residue on the dwelling, is paid to the credit of the insured's estate.

The workers' dwellings scheme possesses many advantages for workers: for example, except for the deposit of £10 no capital is required; the land is cheap, the Government being able to secure convenient blocks at a lower price than is ordinarily paid for single sections; the cost of erection is reduced to a minimum; there are practically no legal charges, and every facility will be given to purchasers to pay any extra sums off the principal owing whenever they may be able to do so.

The illustrations appended to this report show some of the dwellings erected under the old Act, and as those to be erected are of much the same size and style, they are given for general information.

Since the passing of the Act the necessary regulations have been prepared and gazetted, and application forms, explanatory pamphlets, &c., issued. It is fully expected that a large number of applications will shortly be received, particulars of which will be reported in due course next year.

There was no expenditure during the preceding financial year for the acquisition of land. A sum of £28 16s. 2d. was expended for repairs, alteration, and maintenance of dwellings, and £2 13s. 4d. in preliminary, administrative, and travelling expenses. A statement as to the number of houses which have been erected in each district and the rents outstanding as at 31st March, 1911, is shown in the schedule hereto marked "A." There were no additional dwellings erected during the year just ended.

The rents of all workers' dwellings will be collected in future by the Public Trustee as agent of the Department.

The Hon the Minister of Labour.

J. LOMAS,
Superintendent of Workers' Dwellings.

SCHEDULE A.

District.	Number of Houses erected.	Rents outstanding as at 31st March, 1911.					
		Exclusive of Cur- rent Payments (Arrears).			Inclusive of Cur- rent Payments.		
		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Otahuhu and Ellerslie, Auckland	35	28	13	1	61	16	7
Petone, Wellington	28	55	16	8	96	6	6
Coromandel Street, Wellington	12	Nil			15	9	2
Sydenham and Addington, Christchurch	31	49	2	5	86	10	9
Windle, Dunedin	20	40	9	11	57	4	3
	126	174	2	1	317	7	3*

* Of this amount £147 5s. 4d. has since been paid. These accounts are now in the hands of the Public Trustee for immediate collection.

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