

How far the scheme has developed in its application to Government industrial establishments I am unable to say, but the Right Hon. Sir R. Horne, Minister of Labour, speaking at a preliminary Conference held on the 20th February, 1919, said, "I want you to know that wherever the Government is in the position of employers, they are agreed that this principle which gives the workmen a share in the management shall be carried out."

In view of the developments which are taking place in Great Britain, and understanding that labour in New Zealand desires a conference to discuss the question, I trust that employers and members of Parliament will seriously consider the proposal.

WORKERS' DWELLINGS.

Owing to the scarcity of labour and the continued high cost of building, only fourteen dwellings were provided during the year. With the approach of more normal conditions it is intended to proceed with the erection of a large number of these dwellings, and arrangements for the first two hundred have already been made.

HOUSING.

The question of the housing of the people is receiving the closest attention of the Government, with the object of overcoming the shortage of houses which the lack of labour and building-material has brought about during the war, and which has resulted in the almost complete cessation of building operations by private enterprise. The difficulties created were, unfortunately, accentuated by the recent influenza epidemic.

Now that conditions are improving, an endeavour will be made to enable the breadwinner of every family to become the owner of his home on the easiest possible terms. It is therefore proposed to introduce legislation widening the scope of the present law so as to enable local bodies (including Harbour Boards), as well as farmers and other employers in certain essential industries, to undertake their share of this important work. The Bill will include provisions enabling the Government to assist local authorities with the necessary finance for house-building purposes. The Government intends to proceed with the erection of dwellinghouses throughout the Dominion as rapidly as the supply of labour and materials will permit. In order to facilitate the work it has been decided to appoint experts, who will be instructed to devote their attention to investigating and introducing the latest methods of building-construction.

NATIONAL PROVIDENT FUND.

The number of contributors to the fund at the close of the financial year was 14,000. The annual revenue is now £70,000, and the accumulated funds amount to £260,000. The maternity claims dealt with during the year amounted to £17,643, of which £13,744 was due to approved friendly societies, and £3,899 to contributors to the fund.

The amount of £17,000 has been expended by the Government since the beginning of the war to meet the concession of one-half contributions in respect of contributors on active service as authorized by the 1914 Amendment Act.

A noteworthy feature of the work is the increasing number of applications from local authorities for tables of superannuation benefits suitable for staffs, and the movement in this direction indicates that the majority of these bodies will shortly be incorporated in the system provided by the Act.

The experience during the recent deplorable epidemic demonstrated in a striking manner the value of the fund's operations in the direction of assisting the dependants of contributors in cases where the wage-earner had died. The fund began operations in 1912, and, consequently, the number of members who had the five-year qualification as "continuous" contributors was not large in 1918, but nevertheless the Board was able to authorize the payment of claims for widows and children aggregating £19,092. With the rapidly increasing membership and consequent development of the scheme it is reasonable to expect most important results to the community in general from this benefit system.

An amending Bill will be introduced to carry out the arrangements that have been made with friendly societies in respect to maternity bonuses.