

The completely new nature of the detailed work entailed has necessitated a considerable amount of preliminary work being undertaken in the matter of organization and the procedure to be pursued. Nevertheless, considerable progress is being made, and up to 31st March, 1938, approximately four hundred applications had been considered, one hundred of which were referred, after preliminary consideration, to the Board of Native Affairs for decision.

The work of the erection of the houses has been handled almost entirely by the Public Works Department, and as that Department has established a suitable organization, the building programme should progress rapidly. The policy of engaging Native labour has been followed wherever possible, and in many instances unskilled or only semi-skilled Maoris have been employed, and are being trained under Public Works Department foremen.

The houses being erected are of sizes varying according to the needs of the applicants and their ability to make adequate repayments. Standard designs which have been planned to give maximum accommodation and comfort are adopted. The utilization of first-class materials and workmanship ensures that the houses are sound and permanent. In some cases the utmost difficulty is experienced in providing all the amenities which are desired owing to the lack of financial security, but the Natives themselves are realizing that a sincere effort is being made to provide conditions immeasurably better than those under which they have previously existed. Indeed, the new cottages are becoming a noticeable feature of the northern countryside. Many dwellings have also been erected in conjunction with the development of the Native land. However, there seems to be an unlimited scope for improvement in the housing conditions, particularly when viewed from the aspect of health, hygiene, and the social life of the Maori.

As yet, only the fringe of the huge problem of adequately housing the Native people has been touched, but a real commencement has been made, and with the statutory authority now in existence and with the departmental organization which has now been built up, the housing question is being dealt with in a manner which will ensure more extensive progress in the future.

HOUSING OPERATIONS TO 31st MARCH, 1938.

						Number.		Cost.	
						New.	Repairs.	New.	Repairs.
								£	£
Completed—									
(a) Under Act	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
(b) Indigent	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	65	..
In progress—									
(a) Under Act	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	54	..
(b) Indigent	..	..	..	..	..	9	..	2,890	..
Approved but not commenced 31st March, 1938—									
(a) Under Act	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	700	..
(b) Indigent	..	..	..	..	..	23	4	4,780	650
Total authorizations ..						35	5	8,489	650

WAIKATO-MANIAPOTO DISTRICT: REPORT ON NATIVE HOUSING.

The Government's efforts to improve the general housing conditions of the Native people through the provisions of the Native Housing Act and "indigent" housing schemes have been enthusiastically welcomed by the Natives of the Waikato-Maniapoto district.

The conditions existing at the time of the passing of this legislation were far from satisfactory, and the assistance provided by the Maori Land Board and from Native land development funds was not sufficient to materially improve the general state. Even now, the financial position of the majority of the Natives has prevented them from fulfilling the requirements of the Native Housing Act, consequently a large number was assisted through the "indigent" housing scheme. Indeed, the decision of the Government to set aside a sum of £50,000 for the housing of indigent Natives was hailed with great satisfaction by the people, the allocation for this district being £8,100. Although the statutory authority for both of these schemes had been provided, there were a large number of difficulties which for some time precluded any rapid progress being made. The earlier efforts were directed to the establishing of a solid organization to cope with the problem, rather than dealing immediately with individual applications. This course has proved wise, and machinery is now in operation which can adequately deal with the large number of applications continually being received.

In a large number of instances preliminary housing surveys have been made of Native villages for the purpose of gaining some idea of the size of the problem and at the same time completing applications from the most needy folk. It has often been found that those in most urgent need are not the most vociferous, and by the visit of a field officer to the villages the most necessitous cases are able to receive first attention.