

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.—POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT

(a) Immigration

New Zealand's population has been built up on immigration and natural increase—*i.e.*, the excess of births over deaths. In 1800 there was practically no "European" population, and even in 1839 the number was only about a thousand. From 1840 to 1880 immigration grew in volume, first through the colonizing activities of companies and societies, then the gold rushes, culminating in the vigorous development of the country by public works and assisted immigration. By 1880 the population (including Maoris) had passed the half-million mark. In 1888-1891 the severity of the economic depression resulted in much emigration, and more people left the country than came into it. From that time until the great depression of 1930 immigration was on an extensive scale, except during the war years, and it is significant that the total number of "assisted" immigrants to New Zealand to the end of March, 1944, was 226,274. During the depression years departures exceeded arrivals, and although this position was reversed from 1937 onwards the Second World War reduced the numbers to small proportions.

(b) Natural Increase

The growth in population from natural increase has been unbroken, although it has not always been regular. The rate of increase has declined substantially in the last few decades, reaching its lowest point in 1935. Between 1876 and 1880 the ratio of births over deaths per 1,000 population was 29.41, but the rate thereafter fell to 16.20 in the 1896-1900 period, around which figure it remained until the period of the First World War, when it fell to 13.59. The trend continued downward, to reach its lowest level in 1936, 7.89, which low point meant that the population was failing to reproduce itself in sufficient numbers for growth or even for the maintenance of a stationary population. The cause of this decline was the considerable fall in the birth-rate, which descended to 16.17 per 1,000 population in 1935. In 1878, 221.3 children were born per 1,000 women between the ages of fifteen and forty-five, but in 1936 this rate had fallen to 72.2.

The effects of the cessation of immigration and the fall in the birth-rate can be seen from the figures of total increase in the population, by immigration, and excess of births over deaths, which in the period 1926-30 amounted to 101,969, compared with only 54,034 in the period 1931-35.

With the passing of the depression the birth-rate rose again, and the rate for 1945, 23.22, was the highest recorded since 1921. In 1940 the total number of births exceeded the 30,000 level for the first time in the history of the country, and in 1945 it passed the 37,000 mark. A total of 202,359 live births were registered in the six-years period 1940-45, which was a 30-per-cent. increase, or 47,139, over the previous six-yearly period. The excess of births over deaths in 1940-45, 109,688, was 47 per cent. higher than in 1934-39.

Over the 1941-45 period the total increase in population due to natural increase and such immigration as there was restored to something like the hundred thousand mark—that is, comparable with the 1926-30 period.

(c) Effects of Changes in the Rate of Population Growth

These changes in the rates of natural increase and immigration leave important effects on the relationship between the size of the working population and the dependent sections, and on the general development of the economy. To achieve a greater degree of stability in the development of the Dominion it is desirable that population growth should be steady and uniform, and it is clear from the above evidence that a necessary condition to such steadiness is the avoidance of periods of economic depression.

Immigrants are mostly direct additions to the working population, and they become active producers and consumers as soon as they land. Children do not become producers until at least fifteen years after their birth. The decline and cessation in immigration which began in 1927 was felt immediately in the general economy of the country, and the decline in home-building, which commenced in that year, was, without doubt, partly attributable to the fall in immigration.

Had the birth-rate not declined so markedly during the depression years the children who would have been born would now be coming on to the labour market. In 1940 there were 171,628 persons aged 15 to 20 inclusive, but in 1946 there are only 163,720, and by 1952 the number will have fallen to 148,356. (These figures are the births 15 to 20 years previously and take no account of deaths, immigration, or emigration.) Not until 1956 will the figure pass the 1940 level. Not all these juveniles will be available for employment, as an increasing proportion of them are staying on at secondary schools or attending the University full time. It is estimated that in 1945 the number at secondary school or University was 54,000, as against less than 20,000 in 1920, 30,000 in 1926, 37,000 in 1936, and 43,000 in 1939.