

As the population grows, but the total area of land does not, it follows that a time comes when it becomes uneconomic for further quantities of labour to seek its livelihood from the land. Mechanization of farming operations releases humans from a great deal of work and allows them to devote their efforts to other activities. Growth in the number of milking-machines, tractors, and other capital equipment will continue to force labour off the land into the factories, transport, and services.

New Zealand so far has not experienced the great centralization of its urban population which has been characteristic of other countries. The four main cities of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin shared the great bulk of the industrial and commercial population more or less on an even plane, but in the past decade the two northern cities have expanded rapidly while the two southern centres have shown little growth; the percentage increases being Auckland, 24; Wellington, 15; Christchurch, 13; and Dunedin, 1.3.

There was always a big gap between the size of the four main centres and the other secondary towns. For example, in 1936 only three of the smaller towns had more than 20,000 population, whereas in 1946 there were seven. The inland centres of Hamilton and Palmerston North show remarkable growth.

Unless positive action is taken to reverse the trend, it seems the North Island will continue to expand in population faster than the South Island, and that the metropolitan centres of Auckland and Wellington (including the Hutt Valley) will continue to grow in size and importance, followed by strategically placed smaller cities and towns which display marked vitality.

(g) Accommodation

Shortage of accommodation, brought about by the reduction in home-building during the depression and its virtual cessation during the war, is hampering the growth of population and its mobility. Vigorous action is being taken to build homes, and in the next few years it may be anticipated that the accommodation problem will have been considerably eased. When more homes are available in rural areas farmers will have less difficulty in securing labour. Manufacturers will be able to decentralize and employ the growing populations of the smaller cities and towns when houses are available there. But the trend towards further growth in the Auckland and Wellington areas will not cease in the absence of positive Governmental action.

(h) Conclusion

Overall continued expansion of the population may be anticipated, although the rate of growth depends on a variety of factors, not the least of which includes economic prosperity and the social outlook of potential parents. Expansion in manufacturing enterprise may be relied on to absorb increasing numbers of workers and the service industries will expand correspondingly. The major problems will be to secure, first, stability in the rate of population growth, whether by births or immigration, and, secondly, a balanced distribution of the population between rural and urban areas and the primary, secondary, and tertiary industries. Achievement of these aims involves a balancing of a complex variety of policies affecting our economic and social life and the further development of political and social consciousness as to the means necessary to make this balancing possible.
