

forced idleness. The amount of produce that can be taken from any half-acre of land efficiently worked is astonishing. If a small area can be covered with a glasshouse for early crops and more tender plants, production is greatly increased both in quantity and value.

Improved roads and motor transport now make it possible for workers to live on the outskirts of the cities and move rapidly and cheaply to and from their work.

A very successful workers' settlement has recently been established in the Hutt Valley, and the experience gained in this scheme would be of value in carrying out further work of a similar nature. The following are some extracts from a report on the Hutt Valley Settlement Scheme by Mr. F. H. Waters, Chief Surveyor, Wellington :—

Towards the latter part of 1923 and early in 1924 the Mayor of Lower Hutt, Mr. W. T. Strand, secured options to purchase a considerable area of land in the eastern portion of the Hutt Valley with the view of opening up and developing same for residential purposes. At the time these options were obtained the greater part of this land was being used solely for farming purposes, and, as such, was a source of annoyance to the Crown and to the local authority through repeated applications for revaluations under the Valuation of Land Act. Having initiated a scheme which in all probability would make considerable provision for the much larger population which will later be resident in the City of Wellington and in the Hutt Valley, Mr. Strand then submitted the whole of his options to the Government with a view to the latter undertaking the development of the areas. The proposal that the Government would take over and exercise and accept these options was fully inquired into by a committee comprising officers of the Public Works and Railways Departments, and later a conference between members of Cabinet and representatives of these Departments recommended the acquisition of the land included in the options. It was further decided by the conference that the construction of a line of railway through these areas, which line would ultimately connect up with the existing railway at Silverstream, would be an essential factor towards making the scheme a financial success.

The Government, having decided that the scheme was economically sound, went ahead and made its purchases. With the exception of a few areas taken by Proclamation under the Public Works Act, the bulk of the purchases were made out of Land for Settlement Account, and, such being the case, came automatically under the control of the Lands and Survey Department for administration purposes. The total area purchased in connection with the scheme is approximately 682 acres.

In 1925 the Hutt Valley Lands Settlement Act was passed, making special provision for the administration and disposal of lands in the Hutt Valley acquired for settlement or other purposes. This Act provides, *inter alia*, for the establishment of an Advisory Board whose function shall be to make to the Land Board such recommendations, not inconsistent with the Act, as it thinks fit with respect to the mode of subdivision and disposal of lands subject to the Act, and generally with respect to matters arising in the administration of the Act.

Close co-operation between the various Departments is essential for the purpose of this scheme, and it may be worth mentioning here their particular functions. The Lands and Survey Department is responsible for the purchase of the land, the subdivision into residential sites, and the finding of money for the roading and laying of sewers, storm-water drains, and high-pressure water-supply, the Public Works Department supervising the engineering-works above mentioned; the Railways Department controls the erection of dwellings. When the homes are allotted to the various applicants, they in turn apply to the State Advances Department for loans. When these are granted, the Lands Department is reimbursed for cost of land, plus roading costs, &c., and the Railways Department for the cost of dwelling.

The Advisory Board mentioned in Mr. Waters's report was composed of business men and others who were experts in building, gardening, &c. Mr. W. T. Strand, the originator of the whole scheme, was also on the Board.

The Hutt Valley Settlement has been a success, but in the opinion of this Committee it would have been better still if the area of the sections had been larger. They average one-sixth of an acre, which is too small to properly develop the garden production that this Committee has in view. The area of land with each home should be at least half an acre of good land. To save expense in roading, the sections could be given considerable depth. An 80 ft. frontage by 272 ft. depth would provide half an acre. In order to provide for possible city developments of the more-distant future, when the land on which worker settlements are now placed may become too valuable to be continued for this purpose, a reserve for future possible streets might be made at the back of the half-acre sections now laid off. These reserves in the meantime could be leased to the adjoining owners. Assuming the reserves were for streets 66 ft. wide and half this width leased to each adjoining owner, it would add 33 ft. to the depth of the sections and make the area to be occupied by each worker, say, 80 ft. frontage by 305 ft. depth. Of this area, 80 ft. by 272 ft. would be owned by the worker acquiring the home, and the back portion, of 33 ft. by 80 ft., would be leased by the worker and would be available if at some time in the future further streets were required.

The organization of these workers' settlements should be on the lines of the Hutt Valley Settlement, the carrying-out of the schemes being in the hands of the officers of the Government Departments interested, working in conjunction with a carefully selected citizens' board or committee of voluntary workers. Managed on these lines, and with reasonably level lands, homes could be provided at a cost of from £800 to £1,000. Homes of this value are within the reach of workers when sold to them on long-dated table-mortgage terms.