

N.Z. BUILDING PROGRESS

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Architecture, Building, Engineering and Industries

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Editorial Comment

State Housing Efforts.

The Labour Department is not able at present to show that anything practical has been done in the way of building to meet the shortage of houses throughout the Dominion, but arrangements seem to be well advanced for building about a hundred houses of concrete in Wellington and the vicinity. About forty are to be built of concrete blocks, on a system which the Department states is well tested. The remaining houses will be erected on the old monolithic system with wooden boxing. We are not surprised to hear, in spite of rosy estimates made by politicians when the housing question was under discussion in Parliament, that the cost to the tenant-owner will amount to about £60 per annum for a five-roomed place. This is after allowing for cheap Government money. It shows that although there has been profiteering in other quarters, it has been prevented to a large extent among property holders. The Government recently advertised for a housing expert at £750 per annum to take charge of the Workers' Dwellings operations, but no appointment has been made. A good man with architectural qualifications was desired, and the chances are that the Government failed to get the expert at the price. Some day the Workers' Dwellings Board hopes to conduct building operations on its own account, but if it expects the whole of the practical work to be under the control of an officer at £750 per annum, it is likely to be disappointed, especially as the country will look for something exceptional in the way of cheap building when the State gets to work. There is now a wider limit to the total cost of the State-provided house, but the Labour Department has apparently failed in the majority of centres to get any contractor to tender within the margin. It is carrying out negotiations, and hopes to get some more buildings arranged for in centres outside the capital. The initial difficulties of the State undertaking, favoured as it was by the most enthusiastic parliamentary backing, will show the public how badly the building trade is handicapped at the present time.