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BUILDING CONTROL ABOLISHED.

Much to the relief of the community generally, the Board of Trade has relinquished its control over building operations. It has been urged to do so on many occasions by the New Zealand Institute of Architects, which brought many effective arguments to bear on officialdom, but was always over-ridden by the demand for workmen's dwellings, and the keen sympathy of Parliament with the Government's desire to overtake, to some extent, the great shortage which had arisen through the lack of materials. Government control over any industry always causes inconvenience and loss in quarters which have no right to suffer, and it was so in the case of the building regulations. They actually added to the already high cost of operations by the increased amount of preliminary work which had to be done before any contract could be let. The deciding factor in removing control was no doubt the increased supply of building materials, and their reduced cost. The scarcity of dwellings continues, but the Government, in removing control before this has been overtaken, tacitly admits that no amount of officialdom interference and issue of "permits" can dispose of economic factors. Dwellings would be built if there was a prospect of a fair return from letting, but while the tenants' protective legislation remains in force enterprise is likely to be restricted in this sphere. We notice that during the recent short session, when the housing question was one of the many urgent matters brought under the notice of the Government—the average Member of Parliament has a wonderful faith in the efficacy of a question to a Minister that the Prime Minister plainly indicated the necessity for amendment of the law so as to make it less one-sided. He is of opinion that protection is needed, not only for tenants who deserve it, but for landlords who have been exploited by unscrupulous tenants who come under the shelteringegis of the war legislation.

RESULTS OF CONTROL.

Looking back over the events of the past few years it is difficult to find that official control

over building has materially relieved the housing shortage. It failed to deal with the problem squarely, because it did not overcome the financial handicap placed on the construction of houses for rent. What degree of preference was given to dwellings over picture theatres and racecourse grandstands was in favour of the owner who built for his own occupation, almost regardless of expense. The proposal to group a few big firms for large-scale building of workers' dwellings came to no definite result, and no doubt the arguments placed before the Minister of Labour by the Institute of Architects had some influence on the Government's failure to take up the scheme. "The position," stated the Secretary of the Institute in his letter to Sir William Herries, "is not going to be improved by eliminating from the market a large number of the smaller firms who are habitually engaged in house building, and who are really the most efficient house builders, and giving all the work to larger firms which have a limited or past experience of this branch of building."

Persons who wish to build for themselves should be encouraged in every way, for a great number of those who want houses to-day are people who desire something better than the ordinary workman's home, and who are prepared to build for themselves if they can get the material. Indeed, this class of person in Great Britain is actually assisted with a building bonus from the Government. Our Government could reasonably do the same, or advance money at low rates of interest, and on a narrow margin of security. Our Wanganui Branch points out that of 40 builders who are erecting houses in that town, not one is putting up the cheap class of house which is required for the manual labourer, simply because houses of that description do not pay, and only about six are engaged in work other than house building. It would appear from the information we have available, that a similar position exists in many other towns. In any schemes adopted for execution by the Government or by municipalities, special attention should be paid to the needs of the lowest paid class of workers, regardless of whether they are manual or other workers. All houses built under