

Should We Worry About A Declining Population?

Burying Our Heads in the Sand While the Empire is Threatened

THE thing that most strikes a new immigrant like myself to this splendid Dominion is the emptiness of it. This general impression is confirmed by statistics, which show the population per square mile of some typical countries to be:—Belgium 700, Great Britain 470, Japan 320, Australia 2, New Zealand 15. Well-informed authorities are of opinion that New Zealand is capable of carrying about 10 million people and Australia even 70 millions.

One repeatedly hears it said that both Australia and New Zealand are young countries, implying that this lack of population will in due course rectify itself. Have we in New Zealand any right to consider ourselves a young nation? Youth surely implies future growth.

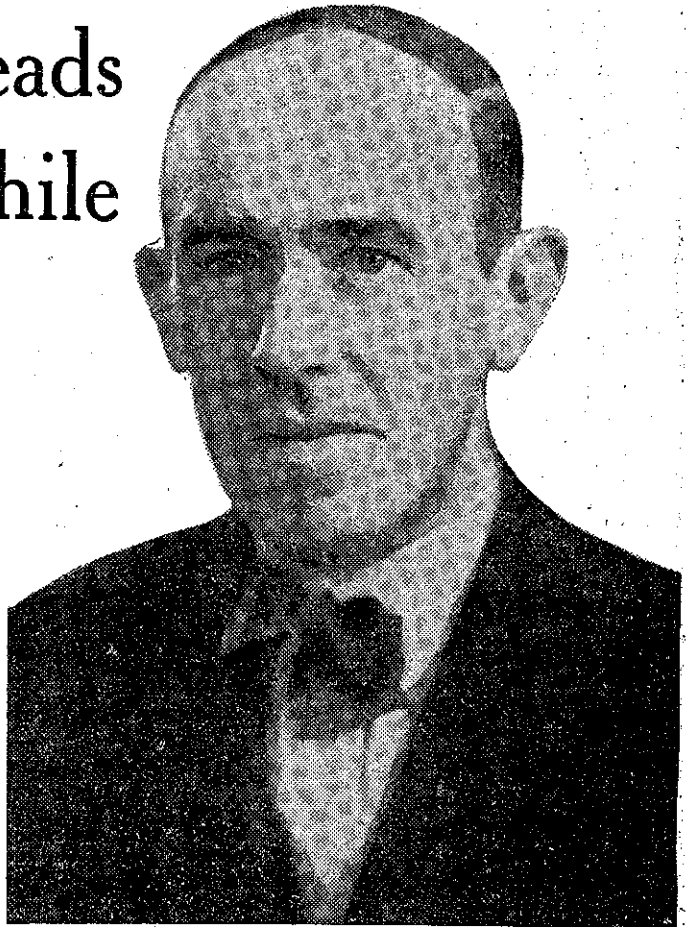
If census statistics and the forecasts of experts who study them are any guide, the population of this country, as well as of Australia and Great Britain, will, within a decade or so, not merely cease to increase, but begin to decline.

It may be asked, "Do we really mind this? We are extremely well off with only 1½ million people and have probably the highest standard of living in the world. Why worry about more population?"

Idealists and optimists look forward to the day when wars and conquests will no longer be permitted. They say:—"No citizen is permitted to seize another citizen's property by force, and this principle should be applied in a properly organised community of nations." To make the parable complete, however, they ought, but always forget, to add "but in a civilised community one citizen may quite properly and rightly become possessed of another citizen's land or belongings by a redistribution of property imposed by the Government for the general good of the community."

What right in common justice shall we have to reserve indefinitely for a handful of British this splendid territory if other countries are overcrowded and crying for room for expansion? But in any case recent happenings in Europe indicate that the prospect of such an organised and law-abiding community of nations has receded into the distant future, and that the era of sovereignty of individual nations and of policies of national self-interest is to continue for some time to come.

Under such a system is there any direct and more or less immediate danger to New Zealand?



—Steffano Webb, photo.

"WHAT RIGHT SHALL WE HAVE to reserve indefinitely for a handful of British this splendid territory?" asks Air Marshal Sir Robert Clark Hall, K.B.E., C.M.G., D.S.O., in the third of the "What Next?" series of articles.

land? There appears to be a very definite one and that is from Japan.

There are people who think that this is a matter which should not be openly discussed. This appears a most ostrich-like attitude. Perhaps there is no real threat, but surely the right thing to do is to look at the matter squarely—not merely to bury our heads in the sand.

The relative densities of population have already been stated, but this is not all—Japan's population is increasing at the rate of nearly a million a year. A densely populated country can support its people by building up an industrial system. This requires markets, and these she is acquiring by her steady and determined policy in China and Manchukuo. But this method by itself is unsatisfactory, leading, as it does, to a badly balanced and unhealthy social system.

What Japan needs, and needs badly, are some lands to which she can send her surplus population. It is of first importance to realise that, unlike the Chinese, the Japanese cannot settle and make their homes in

What of the Empire?

"What Next?" Series

AIR MARSHAL SIR ROBERT CLARK HALL, in this contribution to the "What Next?" Series, warns New Zealanders against the apathy toward our national defence. Now a resident of Christchurch, Sir Robert served in the Great War. He was Director of Equipment for the Air Ministry from 1929 to 1931, and Air Officer Commanding the Coastal Area, 1931-34.

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