

HOUSES IN THE HUTT VALLEY

A KORERO Report

IN THE Housing Survey of 115 local districts in 1935, nearly 7,000 buildings used as dwellings in various parts of New Zealand were pronounced totally unsatisfactory. The equipment of more than 20,000 was considered inadequate, while 27,200 were found to be providing accommodation below the minimum standard. To crown these figures, it was estimated that more than 68,000 people could be regarded as surplus persons living in dwellings below the minimum desirable standard.

These were startling figures when considered in relation to the population density of the Dominion. The explanation of the housing shortage lay partly in the fact that in the depression years building fell off considerably; then when better times came, marriages increased and many people were unwilling to continue sharing a dwelling with other families as they had done during the years of hardship.

To cope with the situation a programme of housing construction by the Government was begun in March, 1937. This programme has since been prosecuted as vigorously as the war has permitted. The outbreak of the war made it necessary to transfer certain plant and machinery to the urgent work of constructing aerodromes, military camps, and installations. It also meant the release of a large number of workers for the Forces. The situation became yet more urgent with the entry of Japan into the war. This practically stopped the scheme, and for two years only a few houses were completed. For the last year, however, the Government has pressed on with the preparation of building sections and housing construction in most of the main centres in the Dominion to the limit of man-power and materials available.

Since the beginning of the State Housing Scheme till April 30, 1945, the Construction Department had completed

nearly 18,000 homes throughout the Dominion. There were at this date, in addition, some 3,500 homes under construction, and about 1,700 let to contracting organizations, but upon which work had not begun. Houses are being handed over to the State Advances Corporation at a rate of about 2,100 a year, a rate which is increasing. Many houses have been built in the Hutt Valley, within the boundaries of Lower Hutt City. Building is still going on there, and it is estimated that some 7,400 house units will have been erected in this area when the full scheme is completed. Other State housing projects, which are part of the same plan, have already been completed in the Woburn and Waterloo areas, where about 1,800 houses are now occupied. Attention is now concentrated on the area north of Waterloo, stretching as far as the Taita Gorge.

Between these two limits houses are being built in areas known as Epuni, Nae Nae, Waddington, and Taita. The Epuni scheme is nearing completion, and considerable progress has been made in the three other districts, where many homes are already tenanted. Epuni, Nae Nae, and Waddington lie approximately adjacent, but the Taita block is half to three-quarters of a mile to the north and west, on the opposite side of the main road running to the Wairarapa. The four blocks tota. in area about 1,200 acres, and were previously occupied mostly by small farms and market gardens.

Much of the hillside section of the Waddington block was cleared of gorse and scrub by the Department before building was begun. This area had previously caused anxiety to its tenants owing to flooding and uncontrolled storm-water. The streams have been tapped where they issue from the hills and led by a system of artificial courses through green belt reserves to the head of the Waiwhetu Stream. On the floor of the valley a swamp area which was regularly