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'THE DEPARTMENT OF MAORI AFFAIRS HOUSING PROGRAMME,  
1935 to 1967.'

A Thesis presented in fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
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## ABBREVIATIONS

### In the Text

B.M.A	Board of Maori Affairs
M.L.B	Maori Land Board
M.O.W	Ministry of Works
M.W.W.L	Maori Women's Welfare League
P.P.R	Persons Per Room
P.W.D	Public Works Department
S.A.C	State Advances Corporation
S.M.H.F	Special Maori Housing Fund (established under the Maori Housing Amendment Act, 1938)
T.G.H.E	Estimated Total Government Housing Expenditure

### In the Footnotes

<u>AJHR</u>	<u>Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives</u>
D.M.L.C	District Maori Land Committee
M.A	Maori Affairs File
Memo	Memorandum
Min.M.A	Minister of Maori Affairs
N.Min	Native Minister
Min.Fin	Minister of Finance
N.L.C	Native Land Court
<u>NZOYB</u>	<u>New Zealand Official YearBook</u>
<u>NZPD</u>	<u>New Zealand Parliamentary Debates</u>
<u>NZS</u>	<u>New Zealand Statutes</u>
<u>SR</u>	<u>Statutory Regulations</u>
U.S	Under-Secretary of Maori Affairs, unless otherwise stated
Dep.Sec	Deputy Secretary, Department of Maori Affairs
Ass.Sec	Assistant Secretary, Maori Affairs
Senr.Admin	Senior Administration Officer, Maori Affairs
Sec.Tsy.	Secretary of the Treasury
Sec.Cab.	Secretary of the Cabinet

## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Maori Affairs housing programme was established in the 1930s through the Maori Housing Act (1935) and the Maori Housing Amendment Act (1938). A special housing programme was required because a large proportion of the Maori population lived in 'deplorable' housing conditions, and it was '... impossible for the average Maori to finance a new home'<sup>1</sup> through lending institutions because they could provide neither security nor regular payments.

The purposes of this study are twofold. First, to examine successive governments' Maori housing policies in the period 1935 to 1967, and discuss how these were implemented by the Department of Maori Affairs. Second, to assess their effectiveness as a provider of housing for the Maori population.

The allocation of resources to Maori housing was a political decision, and set the parameters inside which the Department of Maori Affairs could operate. If governments placed a high priority on Maori housing, and both the Labour and National governments claimed to do so, then one might reasonably expect that the Maori housing programme would be adequately financed. Political rhetoric counted for little if in practice governments made only nominal financial commitments to Maori housing. This study will show that from 1935 to 1967 the Maori housing programme was never allocated sufficient resources to adequately deal with the problem of poor Maori housing.

The effectiveness of the housing programme is assessed using simple descriptive statistics. Monies expended and the numbers of houses built, purchased or improved, are compared with similar figures for other state-funded housing schemes,

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1. J M McEwen, 'Urbanisation and the Multi-Racial Society', in R H Brookes and I H Kawharu (eds.), Administration in New Zealand's Multi-Racial Society (Wellington, 1967), p. 76.

selected population indices, or G.D.P. Other measures, such as improvements in dwelling occupancy rates, amenities, and dwelling types, give an indication of what improvement was effected in Maori housing.

The literature on the Maori housing programme is not extensive. In 1940 Dr. H B Turbott noted in an essay on Maori 'Health and Social Welfare'<sup>2</sup> that by European standards about 50% of the Maori population lived in substandard housing conditions. Turbott stated that government intervention had stopped the 'downward trend' in deteriorating Maori housing conditions, but progress was too slow to deal effectively with the problem. This was because it was '... economically impossible for any government in power' to make the major financial commitment that would have been required to solve the housing problem. In Turbott's view the solution to poor Maori housing conditions had to come from the Maori people themselves, but this could only occur when they had a secure economic position in New Zealand society.<sup>3</sup> A similar assessment was offered by R M Burdon in 1965, but Burdon thought that 'Maori improvidence' also contributed to substandard Maori housing conditions.<sup>4</sup>

The orthodox assessment of the progress of the Maori housing programme during the years of the first Labour government 1935 to 1949 is that although inadequate housing was not eliminated, substantial progress was made.<sup>5</sup> One writer estimated that over 10% of the Maori population had been rehoused by 1940,<sup>6</sup> but

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2. H B Turbott, 'Health and Social Welfare', in I L G Sutherland (ed.), The Maori People Today: A General Survey (Wellington, 1940), pp. 229-268.
  3. Turbott, 243-244.
  4. R M Burdon, The New Dominion: A Social and Political History of New Zealand, 1918-1939 (Wellington, 1965), p. 287.
  5. G V Butterworth, 'A Rural Maori Renaissance? Maori Society and Politics, 1920 to 1951', Journal of the Polynesian Society, 81:2 (1972), p. 181.  
G V Butterworth, End of an Era: The Departments of Maori Affairs, 1840-1989 (Wellington, 1989), p. 17.  
K R Howe, Race Relations Australia and New Zealand: A Comparative Survey, 1770s-1970s (Auckland, 1977), p. 59.  
Michael King, 'Between Two Worlds', in W H Oliver with B R Williams (eds.), The Oxford History of New Zealand (Wellington, 1981), p. 282.
  6. Butterworth, 'A Rural Maori ...', p. 181.

Claudia Orange has questioned this estimate. She has rightly pointed out that such an assessment is misleading because the quality of the houses built was not always high, and the figures used to obtain this estimate include not just new houses, but also repairs and improvements to existing houses.<sup>7</sup>

Orange concluded that the Labour government placed a '... very low priority on rehousing the Maori population.' She bases this judgment on the 'meagre' financial allocation given to the Maori housing programme, and the B.M.A.'s cost-recovery loan policy, a policy which was not relaxed during the Labour period.<sup>8</sup> Improvements in the terms under which Maori could receive financial assistance came in the post-war years, and the Labour government may be credited with having taken 'important first steps' in giving the Maori population greater opportunities to improve their housing conditions.<sup>9</sup> This assessment will be tested here.

Progress in Maori housing conditions in the 1950s has been associated with rapid urbanisation, and improvements in the general standard of New Zealand housing. However, comments on this have been qualified by the fact that by the 1960s a disparity between Maori and Pakeha standards remained, and Maori tended to be clustered in cheap housing areas because of their low socioeconomic status.<sup>10</sup> Schwimmer has pointed out that in 1956 the overall housing position of the Maori population was as 'deplorable' as in 1951.<sup>11</sup> Others have claimed that housing loans made through the Department of Maori Affairs were very favourable because low Maori incomes made applicants eligible for low-interest government loans.<sup>12</sup> But if this was the case, then it has to be asked why there was only a

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7. Claudia Orange, 'A Kind of Equality: Labour and the Maori People, 1935-1949', MA Thesis (Auckland, 1977), p. 94.

8. Orange, pp. 91, 98.

9. Orange, pp. 139-141, 179-187, 228.

10. Graeme Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', and G R Hawke, 'The Growth of the Economy', in W H Oliver with B R Williams (eds.), The Oxford History of New Zealand (Wellington, 1981), pp. 384, 404-405, 425.

11. Erik Schwimmer, 'The Maori and Government', in Erik Schwimmer (ed.), The Maori People in the Nineteen-Sixties: A Symposium (Auckland, 1968), p. 342.

12. A J Ward, 'Aspects of New Zealand Housing, 1920-1970', MA Thesis (Victoria, 1977), p. 187.

small improvement in Maori housing conditions during the 1950s? The reasons for this apparent contradiction will be examined here.

The 1961 Hunn Report demonstrated that the Department of Maori Affairs housing programme was not keeping up with the demand for houses, and that a major backlog of unsatisfied applicants existed. The Report made a number of innovative proposals as to how this backlog could be eliminated, and some of these were implemented. However, the statistics which Hunn used to calculate demand for housing were out of date, and the Report underestimated the need for housing. Butterworth has shown that the increase in the number of houses provided through the Department in the post-Hunn years only 'dented' the problem of substandard Maori housing,<sup>13</sup> but did not eliminate it as the Department claimed<sup>14</sup> and others believed.<sup>15</sup> This study includes a reassessment of Maori housing needs in the 1960s, and discusses why the stimulus given to the Maori housing programme following the Hunn report fell short of need.

A broad consensus is evident amongst these writers. This "standard" view of the Maori housing programme may be mapped out as follows. The first Labour government established the basis for improving Maori housing conditions, and achieved a good deal up to 1950. However, the programme was allowed to stagnate in the 1950s, and a serious Maori housing problem continued to exist in 1960. The stimulus given the programme by the Hunn Report effected some reduction in the number of poorly housed Maori, but a problem still remained. This overview will be examined, and its validity tested using the questions and techniques outlined above.

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13. G V Butterworth, The Maori People in the New Zealand Economy (Massey University, 1974), p. 35.

14. AJHR, 1968, G.9, p. 14.

15. Schwimmer, p. 342.