

First state house opened

18 September 1937

MCH, 2017o Nation Dates FINAL



Most of the Labour Cabinet helped the first tenants move into 12 Fife Lane in the Wellington suburb of Miramar. Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage carried a cumbersome dining table through a cheering throng.

David and Mary McGregor had such distinguished movers because their new home was the first to be completed in a new subdivision of state houses. After the opening ceremony, 300 people traipsed through the McGregors' open home, muddying floors and leaving fingerprints on freshly painted fixtures. They eventually persuaded their guests to leave, but for days afterwards, sightseers peered through the windows.

The first Labour government, elected in 1935, argued that only the state was able to fix the housing shortage. In 1936 it drew up plans to use private enterprise to build 5000 state rental houses across New Zealand. A new Department of Housing Construction oversaw building and the State Advances Department managed the houses. The initiative formed part of a wider plan to reduce unemployment and stimulate the economy.

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