

PART II.—HOUSING ACCOUNT.

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HOUSING CONSTRUCTION.

"I have pleasure in submitting the following report on the activities and operations of the Department of Housing Construction under my control for the year ended 31st March, 1942:—

"1. *Purchase of Land.*—During the year 5,372 building-sites were purchased, bringing the number of sites acquired by the Department to 28,372. Of these, 12,706 sites are not yet built upon, so it will be seen that the Department has a substantial reserve of land for further activities.

"2. *Town-planning and Land-development.*—During the year the staff on this Section of the Department's work has concentrated its planning activities mainly on large housing projects in Auckland and Wellington, where the greatest demand for houses exists. Actually areas are being planned well ahead of normal building requirements, and many schemes are in course of preparation for development as soon as the defence programme tapers off.

"Landscape-development undertaken during the year included the planting of approximately 450,000 trees and shrubs on tenanted land. It is worthy of note that almost without exception the tenants have developed remarkably good gardens and take a real pride and interest in them.

"*Housing Improvement.*—Legislation is being drafted to meet the requirements of the Department when the time is opportune to promote schemes for the improvement of housing in city areas where unsatisfactory conditions now exist. It is anticipated this will be an important part of post-war rehabilitation work.

"3. *Engineering.*—The work carried out by this Section during the past year comprises the construction of 650 chains of streets, 632 chains of sewers, 218 chains of storm-water drains, and 772 chains of water-mains. Seventy per cent. of the work has been done by contract. In addition, a large part of the technical staff is continuously employed in investigating the cost of roading, serving, and developing the many blocks of land that are offered for sale.

"One of the most noteworthy and interesting works undertaken is the construction of the Hutt Valley main sewer. This has now been completed for a length of 5 miles, terminating temporarily at Taita. In order to accommodate the sewage pumps and auxiliary collecting tanks, required in conjunction with the sewer, a heavy reinforced-concrete cylindrical tank has been sunk at Randwick.

"4. *Architectural Section.*—New house plans have been developed by the Department's Architect and his staff as required for different sites, and existing house plans have been revised from time to time with the object of obtaining economy of planning and variation in design. Lack of certain building materials has also necessitated variations to standard plans.

"Plans are being prepared for blocks of flats at Grey's Avenue, Symonds Street, Cowan Street, Parnell Road, and Edenvale Road at Auckland, and at Petone, Wellington.

"Work of a special nature has been carried out for other Departments—viz., hostel and houses at Mangapechi and rescue-stations and houses at Rotowaro and Ohai for the Mines Department; houses at Karapiro, Tuai, and Addington for Hydro-electric Branch, Public Works Department, houses for the Agriculture Department at Palmerston North, and houses for the Post and Telegraph Department and the Defence authorities at different centres.

"5. *Expenditure.*—Up to the 31st March, 1942, the total net payments in respect of the purchase of land, provision of services, erection of joinery-factories, erection of houses, and all administrative charges amounted to £20,272,869.

"Liabilities and commitments at the close of the past year amounted to £2,535,766. The net expenditure for the year under review was £4,020,060.

"*Administrative Costs.*—The total cost of administration of the Department of Housing Construction, exclusive of interest charges, from its inauguration to the 31st March, 1942, was £559,327, of which sum £149,812 represents the expenditure for the financial year 1941–42.

"It will be seen that the administrative charge is still a remarkably low one, being 2·83 per cent. of the Department's net expenditure, excluding administration, since the commencement of operations, and 3·87 per cent. for the financial year under review.