

In the Hutt Valley, where 1,500 sections were made available for building purposes during the year, road-formation amounted to 556 chains, sealing 107,860 square yards, and 122,478 lineal feet of sewers, water-mains, and drains were laid.

In Wellington City, amongst other items, 10 acres of land were cleared, 56 chains of road formed, 41,074 square yards of road sealed, approximately 31,000 lineal feet of water-mains, sewers, and drains laid, and 10,510 square yards of footpaths constructed.

CONSTRUCTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF ROADS

Except in Westland County, where an average of sixty-five men was employed continuously on the Jackson's Bay - Haast Section of the Main South Road, extensive road-construction was not carried out during the past year. Routine maintenance on all road surfaces and work on widening and re-forming existing roads and constructing access roads to coalfields, timber areas, and farm settlements was continued.

Flood damage was fairly general, closing the Makarora-Haast Road and necessitating the construction of 72 chains of deviation on the Awahokomo Road.

On the Jackson's Bay - Haast Section, 76 chains of road was formed and a road opened to Haast. The Hindley Creek and Potter's Creek bridges and one at 13 miles 28 chains were completed, and a temporary bridge built over the North flood channel at Arawhata.

Work completed throughout New Zealand for the year totalled 55 miles of formation, 98 miles of metalling, approximately 9,200 ft. of culverts, and 1,800 lineal feet of bridging.

PLANT AND MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT

The return to normal activity within the Department following the cessation of hostilities has not been achieved as rapidly as was expected.

Though many of the mechanical engineering staff have been demobilized, compared with those mobilized, the numbers returning to the Department are few, and it is unfortunate that the suitable mechanical staff required by the Department find more favourable conditions prevailing in the outside engineering world.

This factor, coupled with the relaxation of man-power control, has considerably delayed the planned establishment of the new mechanical workshops. The establishment of the zone workshops is, nevertheless, proceeding according to plan, and when fully staffed and equipped should enable the Department to handle the bulk of its repair-work.

The return from America and the Pacific of the Chief Mechanical Engineer has resulted in the acquisition by the Department of a large quantity of earth-moving plant and workshops equipment. The foresight shown in arranging this purchase will aid materially the furtherance of the ten-year plan recently announced.

The plant received for this and other Government Departments comprises large and medium crawler-type tractors, excavators, carry-all scrapers, scoops, power-graders, road machinery, loaders, and bitumen-spraying plant. Much is ready for immediate use, but a percentage requires reconditioning, and that is being put in hand now to facilitate the replacement of existing mechanical equipment long in need of overhaul.

Generally, the mechanical condition of plant in New Zealand is in direct ratio to the supply of spare parts and the availability of man-power in the engineering trade. As in the past, the Department still has to produce certain consumable spares, not obtainable from overseas, by manufacture in its own shops when practicable and economic.

From a mechanical standpoint the major works on the Waikato River and at Waikaremoana have been well maintained, no serious holdups being experienced. A certain amount of mechanical trouble met with at the Tekapo scheme has been gradually overcome.