

For the United States Forces who were encamped here during the period, New Zealand provided in the way of construction work complete camps, large storage areas, hospitals and convalescent depots, ammunition stores and magazines, wireless stations, and thousands of huts and buildings for shipment into the Pacific. In all, some £2,500,000 worth of work was done for the American Forces.

Civil defence and miscellaneous items ran to another long list, including air-raid shelters, splinter-proofing works, camouflage works, E.P.S. stores, steel stores, emergency accommodation for munition workers, &c.

Apart from all this, New Zealand sent vigorous constructional units into the Pacific, which built aerodromes, gun-emplacements, camps, hospitals, meteorological and wireless stations, and defensive works of all characters over a wide area in the South Pacific.

The peak of constructional activity in New Zealand had passed before the middle of 1943, though an extremely large volume of work continued to be carried out until the end of that year. Though much of the work started in the earlier period was still being finished, the general nature of the work was changing somewhat by the end of the year. From a defensive emergency the war in the Pacific was now assuming an offensive character, and more and more work was being done on the successively advancing sites of a series of bases now moving northward in pursuit of a retreating enemy. At the same time, stores, depots, and hospitals in New Zealand, both for our own and Allied Forces, were being expanded, while naval, shipbuilding, and shipping-repair work was figuring prominently.

As compared with the total of £16,500,000 spent on construction works in the year 1942-43, the following year's work ran to £11,500,000, the total volume of activity and expenditure falling away rapidly towards the end of that period.

Associated with the enormous constructional effort during this whole spectacular period, the supply industries were working at feverish speed, but in many cases were not nearly able to keep pace with the rate of consumption of building materials. Timber stocks, still almost at normal peacetime levels when Japan entered the war, had been completely wiped out by the end of the crisis period. Cement stocks had long since vanished, while steel was extremely scarce and rigidly controlled.

In the construction of camps and buildings themselves, a revolution in constructional methods and organization had taken place as compared with the earlier part of the war. This will be described more fully in the next section.

3. THE APPOINTMENT AND WORK OF THE COMMISSIONER OF DEFENCE CONSTRUCTION

Guiding the whole of New Zealand's great constructional effort was the energetic personality of Mr. (now Sir James) Fletcher. As head of a large contracting firm, Mr. Fletcher already had a long experience in the problems associated with major constructional undertakings. As Commissioner of