

- (g) Introduction of the system of payment for all defence work on the basis of a standard "master schedule," fixing rates for every component operation which entered into any variety of constructional work. This system enabled work to be put in hand without any of the delays involved in tendering, payment being assessed when the work was finished.

Points of criticism arose here and there as a result of these sweeping changes, but there was no doubt that the prompt and powerful measures taken were largely responsible for the dramatic speed with which New Zealand was provided with camps, air-raid shelters, gun-positions, and all the other buildings and constructional works required by a nation preparing to defend itself against invasion.

The problem, which was difficult enough in so far as it related to the provision of works for our own Armed Services, was rendered much more difficult by the decision to base American Forces in the Dominion. The Commissioner of Defence Construction received very little notice of this, and during the winter of 1942, when the weather was consistently bad, had to solve the problem of transforming bare paddocks into drained, watered, and roaded camps, complete with huts, cookhouses, canteens, and stores, in a little over six weeks. An example of the speed with which work was carried through at that time was provided by the erection of the Cornwall Park Hospital, near Auckland, which stands on a site of 34 acres. This hospital comprises 122 buildings, having a floor area of no less than 8 acres. Its capacity of 1,500 patients is more than that of the Auckland Public Hospital. The preparation of the site was commenced in October, 1942, and sixteen weeks later the buildings were up and patients were being admitted.

4. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND FUNCTIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF WORKS

Sweeping executive powers such as those which were vested in the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Defence Construction are not usually given to private persons in a democratic society, and it would have conflicted with a well-established system of government had these powers remained in existence longer than was necessary to meet the actual crisis.

By the end of 1942 the Chiefs of Staff were able to report that an invasion of New Zealand could no longer be regarded as even a "remote probability," but, although the defence construction crisis had passed, the Dominion was by no means free from difficulty in the constructional field. On the contrary, it was plainly only just entering a long period of great stress. A large programme of defence works had still to be constructed or completed; stocks of materials had been exhausted and would take some years even after the end of the war to bring back to normal; peacetime work had gone far into arrears, and careful organization would be necessary until the arrears had been overtaken. With the advent of peace there would still be many special problems to be overcome in the rehabilitation of our returning servicemen, and it became abundantly clear to the Government that to remove the central control would precipitate a fresh crisis, and that some form of overall guidance and co-ordination at a high administrative level would be