

Considerable difficulty has been experienced—and this has not been overcome—in obtaining engineering and survey staff. It is significant that this difficulty has not as yet arisen in Auckland, where there is still keen competition among roading and drainage contractors. Elsewhere, particularly in Wellington, development work is seriously hampered by this staff shortage and contractors' apathy. An attempt to transfer staff and contractors from Auckland to Wellington was unsuccessful—lack of house accommodation in Wellington was a detrimental factor.

In Wellington, Palmerston North, and Christchurch the formation of streets and house-sites has been done with the assistance of the Public Works Department's earth-moving plant. In Napier the lack of plant and operators is delaying development.

(5) *Housing Improvement*.—The Housing Improvement Act was passed by Parliament in 1945 and became operative on 1st November last. Designed to operate primarily through the local authorities, it aims at the improvement of the physical condition of residential buildings throughout the country and provides for the reclamation of decadent areas. Regulations implementing the provisions of the Act have been outlined in collaboration with the Health Department and are now in the hands of the Law Draftsman.

(6) *Rural Housing*.—(a) Most of the applications for houses and huts approved under the Rural Housing Emergency Act, 1944, have now been fulfilled. The difficulty of obtaining satisfactory tenders delayed some contracts, but practically all contracts are now either completed or well advanced in construction.

(b) The erection of houses and other farm buildings for the land-settlement scheme operated by the Department of Lands and Survey has progressed satisfactorily, considering the difficulties encountered.

In order to overcome the reluctance of building contractors to tender for this scattered work, often remote from towns, it has been necessary for senior officers of the Department to visit the districts and secure tenders by personal negotiation with builders' associations and individual builders. Several tours have been made covering all parts of the country with this object in view, and the results have been very satisfactory. It is apparent that this practice will have to be continued, if building under this scheme is to continue in an adequate volume.

Difficulties in the supply of timber, roofing, and other materials, and in inducing building tradesmen to undertake this out-of-town work, are constantly arising, and despite every endeavour result in delays.

The major part of the design work in connection with farm houses and buildings has been completed, although special problems arise from time to time which require new designs to meet them. The conversion and renovation of existing buildings by its very nature involves considerable work for the Department's staff, but the maximum possible use is extracted from these existing facilities in order to conserve new materials.

To date work has been undertaken in connection with 112 land blocks involving approximately 320 holdings. Contracts have been let for over 230 houses and a proportionate number of milking-sheds, implement-sheds, wool-sheds, and other buildings. Contracts for approximately 70 houses, together with other buildings, are available for tendering. Completed under this scheme are 54 houses and nearly 70 other buildings.

(7) *Man-power*.—The man-power position in the building industry continues to improve commensurate with the release of men from the Armed Forces, although shortage of skilled workers in certain of the subsidiary industries tends to delay supplies of essential fittings. The total labour force employed directly by the Division and contractors at 31st March was 4,742, as against 3,645 a year ago.