

activities, canteen, and library services in all large camps on behalf of the Government. They have also conducted, on behalf of the Post and Telegraph Department, postal, &c., facilities which have been greatly appreciated by my Department as well as the workmen domiciled in the camps.

The workmen engaged on Public Works construction works throughout the Dominion are members of the New Zealand Workers' Union, and I am happy to say that our negotiations with the executive officers of the union have always been conducted in an atmosphere of harmony and good will. I also wish to express my thanks and appreciation to all workers directly associated with the works being carried out by my Department for their loyalty and efficient service. It is a tribute to their good work and the spirit of co-operation in which the union executives have presented their requests to myself and my departmental officers that the works of this Department have for so very many years been free of any serious labour disruption.

The agreement covering conditions of employment of workers engaged on maintenance of roads and main highways will come under review in the near future.

STAFF

The staff at the close of the year under review numbered 3,239 officers, comprising 1,227 permanent and 2,012 temporary officers. My statement would not be complete without an expression of my appreciation of the most efficient manner in which the staff have attended to their onerous duties during another difficult year. I am pleased to be able to say that most of those officers who were on active service have now returned to the Department. I desire to place on record the Government's appreciation of the services of the only two senior officers who retired during the year—viz., Messrs. Alex Dinnie, District Engineer, Napier, and J. G. Hannah, Senior Clerk, Head Office. Absenteeism due to sickness has been reasonably moderate. Unfortunately, it has claimed two senior officers, Messrs. T. G. Beck, Deputy Commissioner of Works, and G. W. Knapp, Assistant Under-Secretary. Their early recovery and return to duty is hoped for.

The loss of trained personnel causes concern, particularly the loss of officers of long service who during their training have become experienced in special spheres of the Ministry's functions, whether in the professional, administration, or executive fields. It is generally known that the wide ramifications of the Public Works Department produces officers of the most versatile type, who for this reason are sought after by other interests.

CONCLUSION

I attach to my statement the annual report of the Commissioner of Works on the activities of his office for the past year, and, in keeping with usual custom, I also attach annual reports prepared by the Engineer-in-Chief, the Government Architect, and the Director of Housing Construction. In addition, there are submitted, in compliance with section 24 of the Main Highways Act, 1922, the annual report of the Main Highways Board; also, in compliance with section 33, subsection (2), of the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act, 1941, the annual report of the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council for the year ended 31st March, 1947.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I desire to assure this House and the country that during the current year the whole resources of the Ministry of Works will be applied towards maximum acceleration of all works of national and local importance, and achievement will be limited only by those retarding factors over which the Ministry has no control.

R. SEMPLE,

Minister of Works.