

It was noted in the review that the reduction in man-power available had taken place almost entirely in the field of local-body and Government work. The implications of this are quite obvious. In the first place, it would appear that conditions of private employment are at the present time much more attractive, and as the major proportion of private work is urban in character the amenities provided by urban employment have had the effect of attracting workers to the larger centres of population. Unless steps are taken to overcome this, we will have the greatest difficulty in getting completed major public works and buildings in the rural areas. Rural housing is already held up, and all large hydro-electric construction works suffer from lack of man-power.

Especial reference should be made here to the necessity for prosecuting with all possible speed the Government's hydro-electric construction programme. This is the subject of a separate report, but it is not out of place to refer here to the urgency and importance of this work. The financial loss to the Government and the Power Boards due to reduced sales of power is substantial enough, but when the value to the community of lost production and service is taken into account, and the inconvenience and hardship of the consumer added, the importance of closing the gap between supply and demand becomes paramount. Electricity is now not only a necessity—an essential component of our national economy—but is rapidly increasing its influence on the form and location of industrial development and of housing. A careful investigation into the many factors involved in reducing the gap between supply and demand was commenced last year, and unremitting efforts have continued to accelerate the design and construction of new plants. The whole question will be the subject of a separate report, but sufficient evidence is now available to indicate here that unless unusual steps are taken the completion dates aimed at will not be realized. The money absorbed in the undertakings and lost to the nation by delays in completion is in itself such as to justify continuous working on such portions of all the schemes as are liable to hold up completion. The hours of working now generally applicable throughout the Dominion should not apply to these critical works. With the amount of urban work available there will remain the difficulty of attracting suitable labour into the remote areas where hydro-electric construction is being carried out or proposed, and in this particular field the possibility of augmenting the limited numbers available by immigration will have to be considered.

BUILDING CONTROL

Within the field of the Building Controller, which, in the main, covers houses and all other building, during 1946-47, work to the value of £20·449 millions was completed (housing, £13·56 millions; other works, £6·889 millions). The volume of work which in this field can be carried out during 1947-48 has, as previously stated, been estimated at £21·73 millions.

The effective controls which can be exercised within the full capacity of the construction industry, estimated at £45·38 millions are:—

- (a) £24·98 millions can now be controlled per medium of the proposed works programme for State and State-subsidized works.
- (b) £10 millions fall within the scope of the present operations of the Building Control Regulations and outside the scope of the programme of State and State-subsidized works, although certain works within the programme total of £24·98 millions are also at present subject to control by the Building Controller.