

APPENDIX E

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING CONSTRUCTION

The DIRECTOR OF HOUSING CONSTRUCTION to the Hon. the MINISTER OF
WORKS.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit the following report on the Department's activities for the year ended 31st March, 1947:—

(1) *General*.—The past year has been a most difficult one for the Department, due almost entirely to the shortage of building materials and fittings necessitating a large amount of work and research in the endeavour to obtain substitute materials. Notwithstanding this handicap, I am pleased to be able to report that the efforts of the Department have been successful in alleviating still further the acute housing shortage in this country.

The number of houses completed during the year totalled 2,595, as against 2,985 for the preceding year, while at the end of the year a further 3,631 houses were in various stages of completion. The slight drop in production was due entirely to the difficulty experienced by builders under contract to the Department in obtaining the required materials, as the Department is geared up to a production greatly in excess of the actual houses completed during the year. This is reflected in the number of houses in course of construction, number of contracts let, and the number advertised for tender, which in all cases exceeded those of the previous year.

(2) *Building Construction*.—Due to the shortage of building materials, the Department has been forced to utilize substitute materials in increasing quantities, and considerable research and experimental work has been carried out. I desire to stress that the use of these substitute materials has not in any instance lowered the high standard of the buildings which has been a feature of this Department's activities. It is unfortunate that the number of alternatives available are themselves restricted. Owing to this supply position, the completion of houses is delayed and, because building contractors wish to keep their men employed, they have been forced to adopt the expedient of taking contracts which they cannot hope, with the present material shortages, to complete in the normal time.

This, however, is to the ultimate benefit of the community, as the contractors' organizations are kept more or less intact, men are fully employed, and, although the procedure is criticized in some quarters, there is no doubt that its advantages far outweigh any disadvantages.

The past year has seen an increase in the number of units built in materials other than timber. At present very nearly three-quarters of the houses being built are either sheathed in or constructed of materials other than timber, the alternatives being brick veneer, total brick, asbestos sidings and sheathing, concrete blocks and slabs, "No Fines" concrete, and concrete sheathing-boards.