

PART II.—HOUSING ACCOUNT

The duties and responsibilities of the Corporation under the Housing Act, 1919, and amendments and other legislation related to housing have greatly increased both as regards the provision of loan finance and the administration of the housing units erected by the Government for letting. The report hereunder provides a brief summary of the activities with which the Corporation is concerned :—

RURAL HOUSING

The Rural Housing Act, 1939, is still in operation, although we regret to record that the revival of interest on the part of local authorities and the farming community which was noted in the report for the preceding year has not been maintained to the extent which the Board would like. The special provisions under which farmers are enabled to raise finance through the County Councils, even though their properties may already be subject to mortgage, are liberal in operation, in that loans may be granted to County Councils by the Corporation at 3 per cent. interest, and the farmers may borrow at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. from County Councils, if they are operating under the scheme. The Corporation will, however, continue to play its part in an endeavour to popularize this scheme still further so that housing conditions in rural areas may be improved as far as possible.

URBAN HOUSING

The Corporation is concerned with various phases of house-building in urban areas for letting purposes as more particularly detailed hereunder :—

(a) *New State Rental Houses.*—In this field the Corporation is responsible for administration and maintenance of dwellings after completion by the Housing Construction Department. For the year under review the number of houses delivered to the Corporation has again increased, and it is anticipated that there will be a still further increase for the following year. For the current year 2,715 new units were handed over, as compared with 2,392 units in the preceding year, while the total of new units completed and under administration by the Corporation as at the 31st March, 1948, reached the substantial total of 25,226. The administration of this scheme throws a considerable burden of work upon the Corporation in that it is responsible not only for supervision and maintenance of the dwellings after completion, but also for the selection of tenants, the completion of tenancy agreements, the handling of the numerous unsatisfied applications involving correspondence with and investigation of the circumstances of applicants, and other incidental duties. The very substantial volume of applications received for tenancies of State rental houses has continued to create a problem of administration which has not become any easier of solution as time has gone on. At the 31st March, 1948, the number of unsatisfied applications on hand totalled 52,186, and of these, 14,137 were from eligible ex-servicemen. It will be noted that there has been a slight reduction in the total of applications on hand as compared with the previous year. This does not necessarily mean that there has been a falling off in applications received during the year, but it is indicative of the fact that the Corporation has endeavoured to review all applications and to “purge” the lists as far as practicable on account of the fact that the circumstances of many applicants have substantially changed since their applications were first lodged, and many indeed have solved their own housing difficulties. Nevertheless, the sum total of applications is still very large.

During the year the Government decided to set up independent committees in selected localities to deal with the task of allocating houses as they are completed to those applicants who, in the opinion of the committee, were most deserving of immediate assistance. The committees are now functioning, and have in the main relieved the officers of the Corporation of a burden of criticism which was inevitable, having regard to the problem involved. It is no easy matter to decide upon an order of priority amongst the large volume of applications which will do justice to all the families concerned.