

that to build an increased number of houses during a given period there must be a corresponding reduction in other classes of building. This was effected by a still further tightening up of the issue of building permits for public, commercial, and industrial buildings.

In so far as housing is concerned, the decision arrived at has produced the desired results. During the past year 12,734 houses comprising 8,966 private, 2,875 State rental, 693 departmental, and 200 for Maoris were completed, as compared with a total of 9,612 for the previous year, which represents an increase of 3,122 houses, or 32·5 per cent.

In view of the acute housing shortage it is imperative that at least 12,000 houses per annum should be built, and even at that rate, when the increased birth-rate, the increasing number of immigrants coming to the Dominion, and the large number of sub-standard homes that have accumulated during the war years and need replacing are taken into account, it will be many years before the shortage will be satisfactorily overtaken.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Such is the position in regard to housing. However, building requirements in other directions have now reached a peak hitherto unknown in this Dominion. The expenditure on public, commercial, and industrial buildings since 1939 has been lower in comparison with total expenditure within the industry than during any previous decade.

In almost every locality there exists a demand for new public buildings. Principal amongst these are education buildings, hospitals, post-offices, telephone exchanges, police-stations, and departmental offices. Despite urgency, many are deferred, and commencement will be according to the priority determined by investigation of the needs of each and every district.

The present position calls for a long-term programme to prevent the existing unavoidable unbalanced state of the building industry developing to a state where the failure to provide such buildings as named, and to which must be added commercial and industrial buildings, has serious repercussions to our national economy. It is a simple matter to make reference to the difficulties arising from the prevailing conditions, but the task of overcoming them is great. I am satisfied that by the continuance of the Building Control Emergency Regulations we are, to the greatest extent possible, using the existing limited availability of man-power and materials to the best advantage.

The extent of the problem is determined by the potential of the building industry ; therefore, it is necessary to be knowledgeable not only of the present potential, but also reliably informed in regard to both the desirable and possible potential at given future dates. Only by this means is it possible to determine a long-term programme for State, State-subsidized, and private works in correct order of priority both in regard to desirability and practicability. Unfortunately, some of the determining factors are outside the control of this Dominion, as we are dependent on overseas markets for machinery and numerous key materials.

ENGINEERING WORKS

Consequent upon the continually increasing demand for electricity and the extent to which all local industries, primary and secondary, are dependent on electric power, every effort was made to step up the rate of construction on hydro-electric works, which have been given priority over other engineering projects. Almost without exception those factors mainly responsible for retarding progress on the building-construction programme have had the same undesirable effects on hydro-electric works. Failing a much improved supply of steel, it is doubted whether progress on these works will be in keeping with the programme to satisfy the demand for electricity during the next five years.