

representatives of the Departments mainly concerned, augmented by the attendance of representatives of other Departments when needed for the consideration of any specific problem, has resulted in much quicker decisions than would be possible by the interchange of memoranda between Departments. There are indications, too, that the regular pooling of information by Departments in the process of works planning is leading to an appreciation of the collective responsibility of all branches of the Government Service which must prove of inestimable value in increasing the efficiency of administration.

As plans for individual works or associated works mature, it becomes apparent in most cases that the purchase of land should be effected as early as possible, both to protect Government and local-authority interests on the one hand and at the same time to avoid unnecessary interference with private interests contemplating building or development. This will be effected by Land Acquisition Committees acting in close collaboration with the inter-departmental Committees previously mentioned. A preliminary appreciation of their responsibilities has already been made by Committees in Christchurch and Wellington, the personnel in each case comprising the District Engineer, Public Works Department, as Chairman, the Land Purchase Officer, Public Works Department, and representatives of the Lands Department and the Housing Division.

Regional Councils have contributed to effective co-ordination between Government and local bodies on planning of both national and regional works, and much benefit is to be seen in the activities of the Inter-departmental Committees as combined with the efforts of the Regional Councils through the District Engineers who control the Committees and are also members of the respective Councils.

In the past year the planning of work and the carrying into effect of approved programmes has been dominated more than ever before by the material supply position. Development of first priority has been subordinated to availability of steel and cement, and other essential developments have had to be delayed both as to consideration and execution because of the lack of vital commodities. Indeed, so much time has to be spent in effecting ways and means of obtaining these commodities to carry out top-priority projects that the wider and long-term aspects of planning have not received adequate attention. It is probable that this state of affairs may continue for some time because of the need to plan forward the constructional industry over at least the next three years in relation to material supplies over that period. An annual works programme carefully prepared in the light of available labour and materials is an excellent thing, but it is not regarded as adequate in itself. It is perhaps timely to say here that, while labour and materials supply will continue to enforce a strictly pragmatic consideration of works-planning, the factor of available finance, more particularly overseas funds, will possibly become an increasing influence upon the limitation of capital-works expenditure to "bread and butter" items.

Simultaneously with the submission of the 1947-48 State and State-subsidized works programme, I reported to you on the complete review of the works industry which had been undertaken by the Ministry of Works in compliance with Cabinet direction. The results of that review were very convincing in so far as the support accorded to the opinion previously expressed by me that, to ensure that low-priority works were not proceeded with at the expense of high-priority projects, it was very essential that State and State-subsidized works should be programmed annually on realistic lines and in true relation to the availability of finance, man-power, and materials, and after taking into consideration the prevailing conditions of the industry as a whole.

Associated with the preparation of annual works programmes is the submission by all Government Departments concerned of schedules of projects they desire to undertake during the year under consideration. The Ministry of Works has consultations with these Departments for the purpose of determining the urgency of works submitted by them. Further, the Department of Labour and Employment submits to