

It must be admitted also that Regional Councils were hampered from the outset by lack of any information regarding the population capacity of their areas, information which is necessary before any forward development proposals can be properly assessed. Steps are being taken to obtain an assessment of the population capacity of New Zealand from an examination of its available resources and to determine in general terms the probable distribution of this population throughout the country.

The Select Parliamentary Committee on Local Government which investigated the subject of local-body administration fully endorsed the policy of regional planning and the setting-up of Regional Councils. While, however, there is much to be said for the principle of regional planning, I feel that further progress will be delayed until the existing structure of local-body administration throughout the country has been reviewed by the Local Government Commission.

ESTIMATING AND COSTS

Costs of construction work in all parts of the world have risen considerably over the last decade. A recent analysis made in the United States shows that in regard to concrete-dam construction the average rise has been 149 per cent. and on earth-dam construction 97 per cent. over 1940 values. Generally it can be said that costs have almost doubled on all construction works. Possibly in New Zealand these rises have not been reached, although it is estimated that costs generally have increased about 75 per cent. Estimating under these conditions, combined with the difficulty of maintaining construction schedules under existing supply and man-power conditions, is admittedly difficult, but every effort is being made to have more detailed estimates prepared and to see that these estimates, in practice, are not exceeded. To assist in the accumulation of the necessary data for detailed estimating and to ensure proper control over works under construction, preparations have been made for the mechanization of the costing system, and the machines, which have been ordered from Great Britain, are now arriving.

STAFF

There still exists the need for further recruitment of qualified technical officers. Efforts to remedy the position are being continued both here and overseas, but while the salary levels for such positions in the Service are low in comparison with outside positions requiring equivalent professional experience the Department will continue to experience difficulty in its endeavour to attract suitable applicants.

Senior officers who retired during the year were Mr. R. H. Packwood, District Commissioner of Works, Auckland; Mr. E. F. Evans, District Engineer, Christchurch; Mr. R. H. P. Ronayne, Resident Engineer, Tauranga; Mr. L. May, Resident Engineer, Whangarei; Mr. G. F. Penlington, Assistant Government Architect; Mr. H. S. Hills, Chief Clerk; and Mr. H. G. Priestley, Chief Clerk of the Housing Division. I wish to express my appreciation of the loyal and efficient service rendered by these officers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would again refer to the five-year forecast of constructional development prepared for Cabinet at the beginning of this year which supplies evidence of the necessity for raising the labour force in the building and constructional industry to at least its pre-war strength of approximately 47,000 men, of whom 30,000 were employed on State and State-subsidized works. Last year the totals were 38,270 and 18,820 respectively. In 1938-39 the number of men under the control of the then Public Works