

PART II — INDUSTRIES

SECTION 1—INTRODUCTORY

In the past year further encouraging progress was made in overcoming difficulties which post-war conditions have imposed on industry. Raw materials have been more freely available, labour shortages have not been so acute, and transport services have improved. The results are seen in the greater volume and variety of consumer goods on display in retail stores and in the sales campaigns characteristic of pre-war trading practices.

Shortages of materials and labour for building construction still persist, but in general there are significant indications that supplies of iron and steel are improving. However, the crescendo of demand for new construction of industrial premises is not being maintained at its earlier intensity and schemes for new projects are not as numerous as for the years from 1945 to 1948.

Because statistics are not yet available, this report cannot include such data to show later than 1947, trends in development, employment, and output in the various secondary industries with which this Department is particularly concerned. However, there are details of interest which are at hand, and these are given below.

SECTION 2—BUILDING MATERIALS, ROPE AND TWINE, PAPER

(a) WALLBOARD AND BUILDING SHEET OF PLASTER

That local production of softboard and hardboard has been maintained at a high level is apparent from the fact that output exceeded 39,000,000 square feet. Moreover, local supplies are being supplemented by imports of certain specifications of hardboard from Australia. Production of interior lining boards and fibrous-plaster sheet has, however, again been hampered by the shortage of plaster-of-paris, but, to overcome this, importations from the United Kingdom are supplementing local output of plaster-of-paris. Exterior wallboard output is still being hindered by cement shortage, whilst the shortage of asbestos fibre has until recently curtailed the production of asbestos-cement sheet. Supplies of fibre are now being received, and as provision has been made for finished asbestos-cement sheets, both corrugated and flat, to be imported, it is anticipated that the shortage will be quickly overtaken.

(b) BRICK, TILE, AND POTTERY MAKING

Production of bricks in both the North and South Islands has in general been maintained at the level of recent years, except that in Wellington district the major works, on which the bricklaying trade is dependent, have operated at only one-quarter capacity. Over-all output is insufficient to meet demand, and until difficulties due to shortages of labour and coal are overcome the prospect is not encouraging. As a means of saving labour, resort is being made to the installation of tunnel kilns. One such unit in the South Island is already being brought into production and another is being built in Wellington.

Production of sanitary ware, insulators, and crockery has been satisfactorily maintained, and with the installation of a modern tunnel kiln for sanitary ware a South Island producer should be able further to increase output.

A marked advance is being shown in the appearance and quality of locally-made crockery.