

For the greater part of the year river flows were above the long-term average, but decreased considerably after January, 1950. The Waitaki flows for February and March were 55 per cent. of the average for those months. Storage which should normally be filling at this time of the year was being drawn down. From the beginning of February until the end of March some 26,000,000 units were drawn from storage, and in the absence of adequate rainfall, depletion at this rate called for a reduction in the rate of consumption of power.

In the past two years, consumption in the South Island has increased by approximately 11 per cent. each year. It had been considered that an average increase of 5 per cent. per annum would meet essential needs. However, the actual increase was about double the amount budgeted for.

When hydraulic conditions commenced to deteriorate in February, and as four years' estimated growth in load had taken place in two years and no new generating-plant will be available until 1951, it was decided that a further increase in consumption during the year ended the 31st March, 1951, could not be allowed.

Consequently, the Power Shortage Advisory Committee decided at its meeting held towards the end of March, 1950, that as from the 27th March weekly consumption must be reduced and not allowed to exceed the amount for the corresponding week of the previous year.

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During the year ended the 31st March, 1950, no restrictions were placed upon consumption, but as from August, 1949, certain restrictions were placed upon new connections in order to limit the amount of new load added to the supply system. Following a meeting of the Power Shortage Advisory Committee, the particular measures adopted were decided upon by the Electric Supply Authorities concerned.

As reported last year, until the Cobb extensions come into operation, the average load increase must be limited to about 10 per cent. per annum. Since supply from the Cobb commenced, consumption has increased at a rate averaging about 25 per cent. a year. This unrestricted rate had probably reached a maximum, and indications were that it was tapering off during 1949. The Advisory Committee decided that for the year ending the 31st March, 1950, the consumption should be limited to an increase of 19 per cent. above that for the previous year. To obtain an average increase of 10 per cent. over four years, the per-cent. increases in subsequent years could be further tapered off without creating any serious disturbance to consumers.

Actual consumption for the year was 61,500,000 units compared with 52,400,000 in the previous year, or an increase of 17.4 per cent. The measures adopted by the Supply Authorities have resulted in consumption being below the allocation. This is very satisfactory as the margin of increase available in the remaining years is correspondingly increased.

The extremely dry period which set in early in the new year necessitated a steady draw on storage being commenced on the 15th February, 1950. The thermal generating-plants were started up on the 3rd March, but by the beginning of April only about two weeks' storage remained at the then rate of draw-off. River flows were sufficient to generate only about one-fifth of the total demand.

On the 3rd April the Electric Supply Authorities were requested to reduce consumption by 15 per cent., which, if maintained, would have enabled storage to be eked out until the end of the month. However, this reduction was lifted on the 11th April, as the rains which set in on the preceding day had increased the river flows to more than load requirements.