

The Taupiri Drainage Scheme in Auckland District is undoubtedly the major work under the first description, providing as it does for the improvement of 93,500 acres of flat land and affecting also the productive capacity of some 56,300 acres of hill country. Operations have now been in hand over three successive years, and, as with all other works of this class, the results now beginning to appear after completion of 75 per cent. of the scheme are of a definitely satisfactory character. Other areas under development by drainage include the Te Kawa Drainage Scheme, also in Auckland District, the Waimatua Drainage Area, adjoining Invercargill, and completed during the year, and the combined drainage and clearing scheme in progress at Paraparaumu, some forty miles north from Wellington. Such works can truly be regarded as of great value to the Dominion.

Sand-dune reclamation works have again received considerable attention, not with the object of rendering these areas fertile and productive, but in an effort to safeguard rich pasture-lands and watercourses from the ever-encroaching sand drift caused by prevailing strong winds. The important areas undergoing reclamation measures are located on the west coast of the North Island, in the Auckland and Wellington Provinces. Programmes of work have been approved over extensive areas totalling several thousands of acres, and in many instances the establishment of marram-grass and lupin has already resulted, according to time, in the partial or more complete stability of the dunes. As the stabilization of the drifts has proceeded, tree-planting operations have been undertaken, and it is intended ultimately to adopt these measures over the whole of the reclaimed areas. The value of these works will be the more evident with the passing of time.

The largest tidal-flat reclamation work in hand during the year was the Ahuriri Lagoon Reclamation at Napier. This area of approximately 7,600 acres was, prior to the earthquake of 1931, an excellent fishing and yachting ground, but its upheaval as a result of the earthquake rendered it a desolate expanse of mud-bank and shallow brackish water. Upon completion of the extensive developmental operations now in progress, it is intended to establish families on small farms. In the North Auckland District the work for the year has been confined to maintenance of the previously completed schemes at Hokianga and Whangaroa Harbours, while in Auckland District the scheme at Kaipara Harbour has been furthered.

The improvement and control of rivers provided useful work for many men, and, indeed, such works can claim much importance by reason of the great benefits accruing to adjacent lands upon completion of each scheme. The clearing of willows from watercourses and the construction of stop-banks, protective groynes, and weirs have been the special features of most of these schemes, which have the common object of improving the drainage of the watersheds and generally safeguarding valuable lands from damage due to flooding and silting whenever heavy rain occurs. Local bodies are capable of rendering invaluable assistance to the Dominion by attending to the smaller works within their own respective borders.

General improvements have been carried out on farm lands during the year, the funds being provided by the interested settlers and the Unemployment Board. The works were individually of a minor nature, but in the aggregate the assistance rendered to primary producers has been very considerable. In fact, in the great majority of cases it is practically certain that the works could never have been undertaken by the settlers without the assistance extended to them under this scheme.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

GENERAL DEPARTMENTAL BUILDINGS.

At Alexandra a contract is in hand for the erection of new departmental buildings. The excavation of the site of the new departmental building at Wellington and additions to the Public Works Department's garage were made. The total net expenditure under this vote was £39,532, which included a further Government subsidy of £30,000 towards the erection of the National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum building at Wellington. This building was officially opened on 1st August, 1936.