

In the construction of an airport landing-ground the excavation of a large drain was necessary, involving the removal of heavy pug from under water. This job could not have been done by hand labour without the construction of an expensive coffer-dam and the use of pumps, whereas the machine, a Diesel crawler-type excavator, carried out the job expeditiously at a very low cost.

The employment of this large amount of machinery has not in any way displaced men on Public Works construction works, as the Government, for no additional cost, is now enabled to undertake considerably more works, which absorb the men available. In comparison with the methods of the past the cost of work to-day is such that several jobs employing a similar number of men as before can be completed for what was previously the cost of one undertaking.

During the year I visited many of the works being carried out by the Department, and I was impressed with the manner in which the various machines are performing, and the resourcefulness of the Department in overcoming difficulties that arose in obtaining skilled operators for this new plant. Very few trained men were then available in New Zealand, and to rectify the position new operators were successfully trained by the Department. These men are now reaching a high stage of operating efficiency.

As it appeared to me that honourable members, without actually seeing all the works in progress and the machinery now operating throughout New Zealand, could not visualize the efficiency of this plant in dealing with the construction programme of the Department, I have arranged for the Publicity Department to produce a motion-picture record covering the varied and unique phases of the work. This pictorial record will shortly be ready for exhibition, and I shall be glad to extend an invitation to honourable members accordingly.

HARBOUR WORKS.

During the year the harbours at Westport and Little Wanganui continued to be maintained by the Government. At Waikokopu the harbour operations were carried out by the Wairoa Harbour Board on behalf of the Public Works Department. At Elmslie Bay, French Pass, a new wharf has been completed, together with storage-shed and wharf-steps.

During the year a survey of the harbour-site was carried out at Jackson's Bay, South Westland, and a contour-plan of the bottom prepared for the purpose of locating a wharf-site.

Plans have been approved and a contract let for a wharf at Whangaparapara, Great Barrier Island.

LIGHTHOUSES.

A new reinforced-concrete lighthouse has been erected at Anne Point, Milford Sound, and a new flashing light has been erected on a steel tower at Pearl Island, Port Pegasus, Stewart Island.

During the year the Assistant Under-Secretary to the Department, Mr. C. E. Bennett, retired after forty years' service, and I would like to place on record my appreciation of his services to the Government.
