

Wellington.—Steady progress has been made with the Government Life Insurance Building, the structural work and external finish being almost completed, and the fitting-up of the interior is now under way. Two suites of offices on the ground floor are already in occupation. The foundations of the new Departmental building in Stout Street were completed, and a start has been made with the steel frame. The Customs Building is being strengthened, and the Ministerial residence in Tinakori Road was converted into two flats. A temporary building in Aitken Street for Government offices has been commenced by the Department's staff, but delay has been experienced in getting the necessary timber, including hardwood, from Australia; this has a striking parallel in the difficulties associated with the erection of the original Government Buildings in 1875. Alterations to the old Railway Head Offices are in hand to provide accommodation for the Army, Navy, and Air Force Departments. A new plant depot is under construction at Pipitea, and a new meteorological office is being erected at Kelburn. A new office building for this Department was erected at Palmerston North. Repairs and renovations were undertaken at the Parliamentary Buildings. The workshops have been exceptionally busy, part of their output being all the furniture for stations 2ZB, 3ZB, and 4ZB.

Nelson.—A new building is in course of erection in Nelson for the Government Life Insurance Department.

Christchurch.—A three-storied building has been purchased and is being adapted for use as Government offices. In addition, a considerable amount of work has been involved in providing extra accommodation for various Departments.

The Sign of the Takahe.—This building is actually one of a series of roadhouses for the rest and refreshment of travellers. It is part of the scheme originated many years ago by the late Mr. H. G. Ell for the development of the Port Hills Summit Road, and carried on under the direction of the Summit Road Trust. Changing conditions have modified the scheme from time to time, and lack of funds has prevented the completion of this building, besides which a good deal of the work done in the early stages was found to be defective and is being replaced.

The original conception of the "Sign of the Takahe" was to provide a building reminiscent of mediæval English architecture, and was probably suggested by the fact that Canterbury, more than other provinces of New Zealand, was founded by men who were steeped in English traditions. It is of Gothic architecture, as practised in England in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, each period being represented. The building is being constructed of stone and other materials of such a durable nature that it should have a life of hundreds of years. The interior decorations in colour are being carried out faithfully to the traditions of mediæval heraldry, and the whole building, when completed, should be a permanent record of the strong ties existing between Great Britain and New Zealand. Already, although far from finished, the "Sign of the Takahe" is one of the show places of Christchurch.

After many vicissitudes it was decided in 1936 to provide labour for the completion of the building as a charge against the Employment Promotion Fund, and since then about thirty tradesmen have been employed on a full-time basis under the control of this Department, working to the designs of Mr. J. Collins, honorary architect, the interior decorations being supervised by Mr. J. A. Thomson. As the whole work includes an immense amount of fine detail, and everything is being done by hand, progress appears to be slow, and it will be a long time yet before the building is completed; but the work has proceeded satisfactorily during the year, and, when finished, will provide an example of architecture and craftsmanship unique in this country.

Dunedin.—The new State Fire Insurance Building at Invercargill is approaching completion, and repairs and renovations were effected to ten departmental buildings generally.

Greymouth.—Additions were made to the School of Mines, Westport. Repairs and renovations generally were carried out.

Generally.—The provision and fitting-up of accommodation for expanding departmental offices generally still keeps the workshops staffs fully occupied.

JOHN T. MAIR, A.R.I.B.A.,
Government Architect.