

PART II.—HOUSING ACT.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING CONSTRUCTION.

The following general report on the operations of the Department of Housing Construction up to the 31st March, 1939, is submitted by the Director of Housing Construction :—

“Housing Survey.”—Under the provisions of the Housing Survey Act, 1935, an obligation was placed upon 119 local authorities to conduct housing surveys. To date 115 authorities have complied with the Act, but certain discrepancies and irregularities which necessitated further investigation have been discovered in some of the returns. Subject to the revision now proceeding, the following brief summary indicates the results of the survey to date :—

“ Total population of 115 surveyed towns	901,353
“ Total number of dwellings in above towns	225,363
“ Number of buildings used as dwellings which, though unsatisfactory, are reparable	31,663
“ Number of buildings used as dwellings which are totally unsatisfactory	6,827
“ Number of dwelling units in which equipment is only partially satisfactory	23,768
“ Number of dwelling units in which equipment is totally unsatisfactory	20,096
“ Number of dwellings at present providing accommodation below minimum standard	27,214
“ Number of surplus persons accommodated in dwellings below minimum standard	68,405
“ Number of dwellings overcrowded	9,835
“ Number of surplus persons in overcrowded dwellings	14,761

“Purchase of Land.”—Land for housing schemes has now been purchased in 124 towns. In the larger centres serviced sections are becoming more difficult to procure, with the result that the Department is forced to acquire a considerable amount of undeveloped land. The preparation of these areas for the erection of dwellings involves a tremendous amount of preliminary work in the way of construction of roads, footpaths, water-supplies, storm-water sewers, and sanitary sewers. The fact that a large amount of such construction work has to be undertaken means that suitable areas for housing schemes must be purchased many months in advance of the letting of the contracts for the actual erection of the houses.

“Erection of Houses.”—The first tenders accepted for the erection of houses were those for 52 dwellings at Miramar, Wellington, on the 4th March, 1937. By the 31st March, 1939, tenders had been advertised for 6,698 houses. These houses were grouped into 1,212 different contracts and are located in 106 different towns. Tenders had actually been accepted for 6,092 houses at the 31st March, 1939, and at the same date 5,390 houses were either completed or in some stage of construction. Building-work was actually carried on during the year in 93 towns.

“At the 31st March, 1939, the total number of persons engaged on housing construction and on subsidiary work such as roads, sewer schemes, water-supply, &c., was 5,428, of which number 264 represented the staff of the Department.

“The number of completed houses actually handed over to the State Advances Corporation during the year was 2,665, situated in 70 different towns.

“Size of Contracts.”—In the early stages of the housing scheme the Department was continually criticized on the grounds that its contracts were too large. The average size of each contract has been five houses, but the Department is now receiving never ending requests from numerous contractors that the size of its contracts should be substantially increased.

“Type of Construction.”—No important changes have been made in the various types of construction originally adopted.

“A greater proportion of metal-lath and plaster houses with timber frames are now being erected, particularly in those areas subject to earthquake. Concrete construction is also being used to a greater extent.