

The shortage of cement seriously curtailed operations on the Turakina-Okoia Railway Deviation, no cement deliveries being made from August, 1945, until January, 1946. From January onward work continued as limited supplies of cement became available, and I am glad to say that the Turakina Tunnel, 6,830 ft. in length, is almost completed, and good progress has been made with Fordell and Wangaehu Stations, the Wangaehu Bridge, and the trimming of the formation in preparation for platelaying by the Railway Department.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION

During the year road construction for the whole of New Zealand was on a very moderate scale.

Fifty-five miles of formation, 98 miles of metalling, and 1,800 lineal feet of bridging were completed, and general investigations and surveys have been carried out as circumstances allowed and with the limited staff available.

IRRIGATION AND WATER-SUPPLY

As with the preceding year, the past irrigation season has been marked by unseasonal rains and floods, lowering the demand for water and increasing the amount of maintenance necessary on most schemes.

Of considerable importance was the completion of the water-race system and the initial operation of the Ashburton-Lyndhurst Scheme, where 699 acres of land prepared by the border-dyke method were regularly irrigated and a further 705 acres of unprepared land supplied at a time when crops were threatened by dry conditions which prevailed at the end of the season. Preparation of land by the border-dyke method continues with a view to eventually bringing a total of 68,000 acres under irrigation.

Construction on the Mayfield-Hinds Scheme, designed to irrigate an even greater area—78,000 acres—is being pushed ahead as conditions permit. Additional flood-discharge siphons have been installed on the Rangitata Diversion Race, and investigation work for the Marlborough and Maniototo Irrigation Schemes is proceeding as opportunity offers.

This year the Irrigation Engineer returned from visits to Australia and America, where he made a comprehensive first-hand study of irrigation projects, methods, and conditions over a very wide field. The experience and information so gained, when co-ordinated with the regular investigations which are being carried out in this country, will be of the utmost value to my Department and the Government in planning and operating future irrigation schemes for the further development of our natural resources.

Considerable flood damage which occurred in the Downlands Water-supply Scheme has been remedied. Progress on the important Wellington Water-supply Scheme has been hampered by the lack of technical staff and skilled labour. However, much of the preliminary work, such as surveys, the construction of a two-mile access road to the Weir Intake site and the erection of workmen's accommodation has been carried out.

LANDS IMPROVEMENT

In the programme of work under this head there has been little variation from the operations of the previous year, and the same difficulties of labour shortage and lack of plant because of more urgent work have limited progress in the past year.

Steady progress was maintained on sand-dune reclamation at Woodhill-Helensville, Maioro and Hokio (Manawatu) Schemes, whilst in the South Island the settlers of Invercargill and Westport districts took full advantage of the Government's land-clearing scheme to increase production.