

194. In June and July, 1942, the demands on the industry were intensified still further as a consequence of two major earthquakes in the Wellington district, which caused extensive damage. Earthquake-damage-repair work had to be added to the priority list, and men were brought to Wellington to cope with the more urgent repair jobs. At this point the industry was being called upon for gigantic efforts and was experiencing its most strenuous period of the war. Men employed in the industry were being withheld from military service, and home-defence personnel were being released to assist the industry to cope with the tremendous volume of defence works.

195. At this stage it is interesting to note the progressive effect on the housing-construction programme of the diversion of the industry's efforts to meet the requirements of the war. Permits issued for new dwellings in urban districts fell from 8,086 for the year ended 31st March, 1940, to 7,147 in the year ended 31st March, 1941, dropped to 5,503 in the year ended 31st March, 1942, and fell away to 863 in the year ended 31st March, 1943.

196. The year 1943 brought a gradual easement in one direction as military works were brought to completion, but as priority lessened in respect of military works it rose correspondingly in other building activities associated with the war effort—namely, the expansion of munition-manufacturing, the building of linen-flax factories, food processing and canning factories, the provision of additional export storage space, and the development of hydro-electric schemes—notably the Karapiro project.

197. In June, 1943, the Defence Works Labour Legislation Suspension Order 1942 was replaced by the Essential Building Works Labour Legislation Modification Order 1943, which had wider application, applying not only to defence works, but also to the construction of hospitals and to any other works to which the Minister of Works declared that the provisions of the Order should apply and also to the construction of State houses in the North Island. A minimum forty-eight hour week, was prescribed for works coming within the scope of the order which also provided for the reorganization of Building Committees.

198. Priorities within the industry continued to be determined by the Building Controller, who also continued to deal with all applications for building permits.

199. In September, 1943, the declaration of essentiality affecting the industry was amended to cover all undertakings certified by the Building Controller as being works to which the Essential Building Works Labour Legislation Modification Order 1943 applied.

200. Up to 31st March, 1943, the industry had received assistance through the direction back into the industry of a number of men with previous experience, and through the constant realignment of labour throughout the industry in accordance with job priorities. During the twelve months from 1st April, 1943, to 31st March, 1944, while 337 men were made available to the Armed Forces from the industry, 1,691 men were released from the Armed Forces to it, and from October, 1943, to March, 1944, a further 890 directed into it from other industries. As at 31st March, 1943, 1,820 Grade I men were held in the industry on appeal.

201. During 1944 the industry was assisted considerably by the direction to building and construction jobs of volunteers from the Third (Pacific) Division, of whom 1,386 were employed in the industry under direction at the end of November, 1944. In November, 1944, in order to meet the man-power requirements of the overseas Forces, an intensive comb-out of Category "A" men held in the industry on appeal was undertaken, and during the period 1st November, 1944, to 30th April, 1945, 768 men were released to the Forces. From 1st April, 1944, to 31st March, 1945, man-power releases from the Forces to the industry, however, totalled 3,223, including releases from the Third (Pacific) Division. Directions from other industries during the same period amounted to 2,222 and directions of disengaged persons aggregated 521, giving a total inflow of labour of 5,966 men over the twelve months.