

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Our loan programme for the past year, apart from borrowing for war purposes, visualized £16,650,000 being required, but shortage of materials and the fact that our man-power was only partially reabsorbed into civilian employment militated against fully developing the plans made for the year. As a result, our borrowing was reduced, the amount raised under this heading being £12,980,000.

As has been the case for several years past, the whole of this loan programme has been financed by funds received from State Departments for investment.

Now that the war has happily ended, the Government are able to resume their long-term policy of public works. My colleague, the Hon. the Minister of Works, has already announced the Government's plans in this connection, covering the whole Dominion.

Housing is, of course, regarded as of first priority, and although we have much lee-way to make up, even at present our housing standards compare favourably with those of any other part of the world.

After housing is the important question of increasing hydro-electric supplies. In the North Island, a chain of ten electric-power stations generating 800,000 kilowatts is in the process of being constructed on the Waikato River, which will have the effect of trebling present supplies. In the South Island the Clutha River scheme will be implemented, while the Tekapo Lake control and power-station and the Cobb River and Waitaki extensions will be completed.

Irrigation and land development occupies a prominent place in the Government's plans, the objective being not only to bring additional areas under cultivation and to improve existing holdings by the provision of adequate water-supplies, but by further reclamation to provide additional land for industrial purposes.

Main Highways Account

Highways and roads have now reached a stage where a comprehensive overhaul is due. Both have suffered from diversion of labour and materials during the war years and if New Zealand is to maintain her standard of arterial highways and roads, considerable expenditure must necessarily be incurred in both delayed maintenance and new development.

In regard to the main highways the Government have decided to provide additional financial assistance to the account. The revenue of the Main Highways Account fell from £3,060,000 for the year 1938-39 to £1,692,000 for the year 1943-44. Because of this heavy reduction in income the recoupment of interest to the Consolidated Fund was suspended from the 1st April, 1943, until such time as the revenue of the Main Highways Account recovered sufficiently to pay current interest and the arrears. Wartime postponement of main-