

The shortage of steel is having a serious effect on the fabrication of steel towers for transmission lines. At the present unsatisfactory rate of delivery, work contemplated to be completed in three years will take at least six years to complete. Major water-supply schemes are similarly affected.

During the past year weather conditions were most favourable for work on highways, particularly sealing, and work completed represents one of the best years on record since the inception of the Main Highways Board. This must not be interpreted to imply that the Board has undertaken a major construction programme, as work has been almost entirely confined to sealing and normal maintenance and repairs of damage due to excessive wear during the war years.

Numerous other engineering works, although regarded as highly essential but rated with a lower priority, have of necessity been deferred, as it is desirable that a minimum of effort within the industry lies dormant in uncompleted projects.

TOWN-PLANNING

During the year the staff of the Town-planning Division has been strengthened, but has been unable to cope with the increasing demands for their services. While primarily the responsibility of the Division is the administration of the Town-planning Act, 1926, relating to town-planning generally, and the Town-planning Amendment Act, 1929, relating to regional planning, many specific problems of physical development, both within the Ministry and originating from other Departments, are referred to the Division for investigation and report. Legally, the responsibility for planning throughout New Zealand falls upon the local bodies concerned, and the Division, in effect, operates both to assist the local bodies with their planning schemes and to ensure that Government development proposals fit in with the local-body plans.

Pursuant to the requests of the Municipal Association, planning officers have been made available when asked for by individual local bodies to assist with their town-planning schemes. There is a general recognition throughout New Zealand of the need for town-planning and the requests for assistance are in excess of the resources of the present staff.

During the year plans have been prepared or have been commenced for Richmond, Ashburton, Mosgiel, Gisborne, Te Awamutu, and Upper Hutt Borough Councils and for the Johnsonville Town Board. Extra-urban planning schemes are also in course of preparation for urban areas within the Ashburton, Hauraki Plains, Coromandel, Waimea, Matamata, and Cook Counties. The costs of this work are recoverable from the local authorities concerned.

In addition to this, a number of local authorities have themselves prepared plans which have been submitted for provisional approval to the Town-planning Board. These are referred to the Division for investigation and report back to the Board. Amongst the plans have been the Palmerston North, Napier (Marewa), Napier (Onekawa), Rotorua, and Timaru Borough planning schemes and the Huntly-Pukemiro (Raglan County) extra-urban planning scheme.

A number of appeals have also been made to the Town-planning Board under the interim development-control provisions of the Town-planning Act against decisions of local authorities refusing permission to erect buildings and carry out works not in conformity with planning schemes. Here again the staff of the Planning Division has been called upon to provide the necessary technical reports to assist the Board in reaching decision.

In the purely Government sphere, plans have been prepared for the location and layout of Government industrial estates at Taita, Naenae, and Seaview, and for the redevelopment of various other concentrations of storage and other buildings erected during the war. In addition, the Division investigates and reports upon the location and layout of Government administrative and office centres in the main metropolitan areas and in the various provincial towns for the Government Centres Committee and