

Important buildings were also completed or in course of construction for other Departments, including Health, Police, Post and Telegraph, Labour and Employment, and Maori Affairs.

A heavy programme of maintenance work on departmental buildings, together with renovations, provision of heating, air-conditioning, refrigeration, fire-protection services, and electrical services, was also carried out by the workshops staffs. Emergency repairs to houses and commercial buildings in Hamilton and Frankton damaged by the tornado were undertaken and completed rapidly and most efficiently. The expected visit of Their Majesties, which, unfortunately, did not eventuate, involved a considerable amount of preparatory work in connection with Government Houses at Auckland and Wellington and on other premises throughout the country. Planning for the eventual establishment of Government and civic centres in various major towns throughout the country has continued during the year in collaboration with the local authorities concerned.

HYDRO-ELECTRIC DEVELOPMENT

The high priority accorded to hydro-electric development has again resulted in good progress being made and some substantial increases have been made to generating capacity during the year.

In order to present a clear picture of the position, I am incorporating in my report as Minister in Charge of the State Hydro-electric Department a general review of the construction programme that is being carried out by the Works Department as well as that executed by the State Hydro-electric Department.

A more detailed reference to the civil engineering work will be found in the report addressed to me by the Engineer-in-Chief and attached to this statement (Appendix C).

MAIN HIGHWAYS

In common with other roading authorities throughout the world, the Main Highways Board is most concerned at the deterioration of the road surfaces over recent years as a result of the operation of totally different post-war traffic. Long trucks and buses when operated on the many narrow highways of this country are most destructive to the verges of the carriage-way and cause the bituminous pavement on sealed roads to break away badly at the edges. While the longer and wider trucks and buses have involved the Board in more costly construction and greater expenditure on maintenance, it is the increase in numbers and weight that is causing the most serious damage to our roads and bridges. Until the roads can be strengthened to carry this wider and heavier traffic, pot-holing and surface failures must occur despite intensive maintenance. The Main Highways Board is fully aware of the importance of road transport to the economy of the country, and will do everything that is humanly possible with the finance available to provide roads that will allow safe and economic transport.

I mentioned in last year's report that there was need for greater co-operation between the roading authorities and the transport authorities, and I am glad to say that some progress has been made in this direction. It is in the interests of the over-all economy of the country and the preservation of our roads and bridges that the axle-loading issues be determined on a reasonably balanced basis and then strictly enforced.

The activities of the Main Highways Board for the last financial year are described in its annual report, which is attached to this statement (Appendix D).

It is pleasing to be able to record that the net increase in dustless surfacing amounted to 263 miles, and that the Dominion total is now 4,186 miles, or 33 per cent. of the highways system. In addition to the extension of sealed surfaces, a length of 314 miles of existing sealed surfaces received a maintenance coat.