

APPENDIX E

SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SOIL CONSERVATION AND RIVERS CONTROL COUNCIL

The Hon. the MINISTER OF WORKS.

SIR,—

In accordance with the requirements of section 33 of the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act, 1941, the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council has the honour to submit its seventh annual report for presentation to Parliament.

The report covers the period 1st April, 1948, to 31st March, 1949.

GENERAL

The Council met on eleven occasions during the year and inspections were made of the Southland, Otago, Manawatu, Wairarapa, and Rangitikei Catchment Districts.

Steady progress has been made with soil conservation and river control work during the year despite difficulties and delays beyond the control of the Council experienced in regard to the constitution of additional catchment districts and shortage of trained staff. No new catchment districts or soil conservation districts have been constituted during the year.

River control works have again accounted for the major expenditure, with the clearing of river channels a special feature. There has been a very large increase in drainage works both in old drainage districts and in new developmental areas. This work is responsible for a considerable immediate increase in production.

Only one major river control scheme and one major drainage scheme have been completed during the year, but several major proposals have been finalized and finance arranged, while proposals for several other major works are well advanced.

Lack of soil conservation staff has hampered progress on that side of the work, a fact which is giving the Council very considerable concern, as the putting into effect of soil conservation practices in our worst problem areas is a matter of considerable urgency. Education and publicity work has been effective up to a point in making landholders aware of the problem, but it is necessary to back this up with personal contacts by trained conservators.

The minor works scheme has been decentralized and procedure simplified, and this has resulted in a considerable speed-up of works. Catchment Boards and other constituent local authorities are taking increasing advantage of the maintenance subsidies offering for river and drainage work. Catchment Boards are still handicapped by lack of ready finance to cover the local share of the cost of minor works, general works, and maintenance. This has been met temporarily by special grants from the Council.

Boards received considerable assistance during the year by way of subsidies. A recent survey of authorizations indicated that rates of subsidy averaged 2.50 to 1 for river works, 1 to 1 for drainage works, and 3 to 1 for soil conservation works. Considering total expenditure, including special grants, Catchment Board contributions amounted to 27 per cent. of the total.

The total expenditure from the soil conservation and rivers control vote during the year 1948-49 was £464,942, as against £326,914 for 1947-48. In addition, local-body contributions amounted to approximately £160,000.