

At the beginning of the period under review the short supply of reinforcing-steel seriously restricted work on all major schemes, but this difficulty has been largely overcome by the importation of English steel (at a much higher cost than that formerly obtained from Australia). Cement supplies and distribution have been far from satisfactory, entailing additional costs and many delays, affecting the sequence of all trades.

Timber-supplies are still difficult, particularly in the South Island. The supply lacks balance; sizes or quality are often not available when required. Large supplies of exotic timber are now coming to hand.

Frequent changes in the cost of basic building materials and the upward trend in award rates brought many difficulties. It was found necessary to provide special clauses to take care of this in larger contracts in order to provide a stable basis for tendering.

Apart from the design, construction, and maintenance of buildings technical assistance has been given to a number of Government authorities, including the Earthquake and War Damage Commission, the Standards Institute, the Licensing Commission, the Local Government Loans Board, and the Community Centre War Memorials Committee. Also, architectural staff have been seconded to the Health Department, the Maori Affairs Department, and the State Hydro-electric Department in order that they may assist in direct association with the technical officers of those Departments.

I wish, in conclusion, to place on record my appreciation of the efficient service and loyalty of all my staff and to acknowledge the co-operation and assistance given by officers of other Divisions and by the master builders.

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