

The development of the New Zealand Air Force Base at Hobsonville has proceeded satisfactorily, and the following works have been completed: Seaplane hangar block, comprising plumbers' and blacksmith shop, engineers' repair shop, aircraft-repair shop, marine store-room, Dope-room (less heating); also the married quarters, oil-store, fire-alarm system, No. 3 hangar, general store (ground floor only), fuelling-station, garage, and the sealing of the roads. Though the workshops have been completed, there has been no money available for machinery and fittings and tools.

The Wigram Aerodrome has been maintained in fair order.

#### PLANT AND MECHANICAL APPARATUS.

The stoppage of four major railway-construction works in December last released a quantity of construction plant, at least half of which has now been transferred for use on other railway and hydro-electric construction jobs, which were previously short-supplied, and the remainder, which comprises the older and more worn items, is being, wherever expedient, put in good repair for transfer later to wherever required.

Arapuni Hydro-electric construction works absorbed some of the available plant, as also did Waitaki hydro-electric works and the South Island Main Trunk Railway, but a certain amount of new plant also was required to carry out special work at Arapuni.

Bridge-construction jobs in hand throughout New Zealand during the year necessitated the supply of a considerable quantity of plant.

Machinery for the purpose of crushing stone in large quantities for road works in the North was installed at Motutara Island Quarry, and this necessitated several transfers of existing plant and a few new purchases.

A good deal of old plant that has become too expensive to maintain, as compared with new plant, and certain obsolete plant has been disposed of by sale after calling for public tenders, this being the policy of the Department in all such cases. New plant items were purchased by public tender, to, in some cases, serve as replacements for discarded machinery.

The major items purchased during the year include one complete set of airlock equipment, two electric hoists, three steam boilers, nine motor-cars, twenty-five motor-lorries, four compressors, two conveyers, one overhead electric crane, six oil-engines, one mechanical excavator, five fans, two oil-burning rivet-forges, three motor graders, one mechanical loader, five electric-battery locomotives, four motor generator sets, two petrol-locomotives, one steam-locomotive, one petrol lighting-set; thirty-one machine tools, two drill-sharpeners, six concrete-mixers, four electric motors, twenty-three pumping units, five air-receivers, two road-draws, one sand-blast plant, five tractors, one motor-velocipede, four welding plants, two oil winches, one electric winch, four steam winches and boilers.

Inspecting of motor-omnibuses is carried out for the Transport Department, and work of a mechanical nature is carried out for other Government Departments and for the Cook Islands and Samoan Administration, as well as for local bodies throughout New Zealand.

#### HAWKE'S BAY EARTHQUAKE.—OPERATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH RESTORATION OF DAMAGE.

Early on the morning following the Hawke's Bay earthquake of the 3rd February last the Department's officers commenced emergency operations in connection with the erection of cookhouses and other emergency accommodation for the use of the various organizations set up to deal with the earthquake situation.

Cookhouses were erected at Nelson Park and six other suitable locations. The buildings housing the Napier Borough pumping-station and power-station were shored up and made safe for operation. The Hawke's Bay steam laundry was made safe for the handling of the hospital and other laundry-work. Parties of workmen were organized to temporarily cover the roofs of houses where chimneys had crashed through in the Napier Borough and adjoining districts, extending as far as Taradale and Clive.