

PART II. HOUSING ACT.

1. *Report of Director of Housing Construction.*—The following general report on the operations of the Department of Housing Construction up to the 31st March, 1938, is submitted by the Director of Housing Construction :—

“*Housing Survey.*—The housing survey, required to be carried out by local authorities under the Housing Survey Act, 1935, and subsequent extensions, has been completed in most centres of population. Up till the date of writing this report 105 of the 119 authorities affected by the Act have furnished the necessary returns to the Department of Housing Construction. The returns from ninety towns have been analysed, and the following brief summary indicates the results—

“ Total population of the ninety towns in question	655,829
“ Number of dwellings	163,429
“ Number of buildings used as dwellings which are unsatisfactory but reparable	21,697
“ Number of buildings totally unsatisfactory	3,653
“ Number of dwelling units in which equipment is only partly satisfactory	16,174
“ Number of dwelling units in which the equipment is totally unsatisfactory	13,891
“ Number of houses at present providing accommodation below the minimum standard	20,260
“ Number of surplus persons accommodated in these houses ..	50,686

“*Purchase of Land.*—Land for housing schemes was purchased in seventy-three towns during the year. A number of the properties acquired have to be developed by the Department, and the provision of the necessary services involves a considerable amount of engineering.

“*Erection of Houses.*—The first tenders accepted for the erection of houses were those for fifty-two dwellings at Miramar on the 4th March, 1937. By the 31st March, 1938, tenders had been advertised for 3,172 houses. These houses were divided up into 643 different contracts and are located in seventy different towns.

“Tenders had actually been accepted for 2,507 houses at the 31st March, 1938, and 1,959 houses were either completed or in some stage of construction. At the end of the financial year operations had actually been commenced in fifty-three towns.

“At the same date the total number of persons engaged on housing construction and on subsidiary works such as roads, sewerage schemes, water-supply, &c., was 4,311, of which 155 represented the staff of the Department.

“*Type of Construction.*—All the houses in the initial contracts were of wood-frame construction, approximately two-thirds having external walls of brick veneer, while one-third were finished with weatherboards. A proportion of the brick-veneer houses have a plaster finish. In addition to these types of construction, a number of houses have been erected in single- and double-wall concrete. The erection of concrete houses was restricted to those areas where the conditions are peculiarly favourable. A proportion of metal-lath and plaster houses with timber frames are now being introduced into the contracts, particularly in those areas subject to earthquakes.

“It should be mentioned that in all designs particular attention is being given to earthquake-resisting construction. All external foundations are continuous in type and reinforced. All chimneys, both brick and concrete, are likewise reinforced with steel bars. Special attention is given to the bracing of wood-frame construction.

“*Elimination of Poles.*—In all the Department's schemes, and particularly in those areas which are being subdivided and developed by the Department, every effort is being made to eliminate unsightly and dangerous poles.

“Wireless poles are eliminated by the provision of concealed aerials in the roofs of the houses.