

## HOUSING CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

The Public Works Department has undertaken a considerable amount of work in preparation of building-sites, construction of roads and footpaths, and installation of water, sewerage, and drainage services in connection with housing construction, especially in the Hutt Valley, where 1,500 sections were made available for building purposes during the year. Except for delays in the construction of kerbs, channels, and concrete footpaths due to the cement shortage, good progress was maintained throughout.

## COAL PRODUCTION

All possible assistance has been given to the Mines Department in the development and operation of opencast mines in various localities. My Department has appreciated the seriousness of the coal shortage, and heavy excavation plant has been used with a view to producing the maximum tonnage of coal in the minimum of time.

Opencast production has been greatly hampered by adverse weather conditions, which have frequently prevailed; nevertheless, a steady coal output has been maintained from all mines.

The new mine at Wangaloa, upon which work commenced late in 1945, had produced 8,632 tons of coal by March of this year, despite the considerable amount of development work involved in constructing one mile and a half of access road, a railway siding, screening-plant, and workmen's accommodation.

## LIGHTHOUSES AND HARBOUR-WORKS

The electrification of Godley Head Lighthouse, the completion of a sewage disposal and drainage system at Portland Island Lighthouse, and the installation of marker buoys in the Kaipara Harbour, were the only new works undertaken for lighthouse services.

Extensive repairs to the Hokitika Wharf were effected.

## SOIL CONSERVATION AND RIVERS CONTROL

During the year under review ten Catchment Boards have been in operation, while an eleventh has been constituted, but the election of its members has not yet been held. The recruitment of staff for these Boards is still a problem, but with the return of technical men from the fighting Services these difficulties should shortly be solved.

I am pleased to advise honourable members that Catchment Boards have been submitting to the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council well-conceived proposals for holding rivers and for protecting land and settlement from erosion and inundation. At the same time all Boards have been investigating the origin of their problems, which are situated mainly in the headwaters of the streams and, with much assistance from the technical Government nominees on their Boards, are making surveys and, in certain cases, have already consolidated proposals for the steady development of remedial measures in particular areas.

As I have addressed honourable members on an earlier occasion, "hill country drained by large rivers has been permitted to be denuded of forests, willows have been allowed to grow till they have choked the flow of rivers and allowed flood-waters to escape over surrounding country, and rivers have been left to erode their banks and fill up their beds with silt, soil, and shingle. All these causes of flooding could long ago have been removed, or at least very much mitigated, by judicious reafforestation, and maintenance and control of river-beds."