

The total number of houses completed in 1946-47—a record year—was 9,612 (State and private); therefore, the total for 1947-48 exceeds that number by 3,122, which represents an increase of 32·5 per cent.

Considering the conditions prevailing within the industry, this is a remarkable performance, and I take this opportunity of personally thanking all those who have contributed towards this record achievement. I desire also to make special reference to the work of the 2,431 rehabilitation trainees who are employed on the erection of State rental houses. I have personally inspected their work in the many centres where they are engaged, and from every source has come unqualified praise of their workmanship. As at the 31st March, 1948, 12,339 houses (State, 3,491; private, 8,827) were under construction.

The continuing shortage of certain materials has necessitated much attention being given to the use of suitable substitutes. State houses are being erected using specially designed concrete bearing-walls which permit the use of a minimum amount of steel. Other types adopted include total brick, cell concrete, and pumice concrete. Contracts have been prepared for both sun-dried brick and pise-de-terre houses and dwellings have been erected with sheathings of brick veneer, plaster on metal lath or cement fibre sheets, asbestos-cement sheets, and asbestos sidings.

A prefabricated house has been imported from Sweden, and when erected will be studied to see whether this type of house is suitable for New Zealand conditions and requirements. The Housing Division has given particular attention to the study of overseas house-building methods, and no opportunity will be lost in adopting any features which are considered acceptable to our needs. The Commissioner of Works, Mr. E. R. McKillop, will also undertake a close examination of overseas methods and designs during his visit to Great Britain, Europe, and United States.

The need for rural housing is fully appreciated by the Government, and although considerable progress has been made in the erection of houses and farm buildings for the rural settlement of ex-servicemen and for timber-workers, much difficulty has been experienced in securing contractors for work in country districts.

Additional land located in 77 towns and sufficient for 3,494 State rental houses was purchased during the past year. To meet the needs of ex-servicemen desiring to build their own homes, 160 building sections were transferred to the Lands and Survey Department.

Detailed scheme plans were completed for a block of 1,000 units at Mount Roskill and for additional development at Tamaki. Other major schemes included Fairfield (Hamilton), Riccarton (Christchurch), Mosgiel, Reefton, Palmerston North, Pahiatua, Masterton, and Hastings. Several schemes are at present being investigated and negotiations for the purchase of the land are in hand. Preliminary and detailed planning also includes the Porirua - Titahi Bay area, which will constitute the largest housing settlement yet undertaken by the Government. In some localities blocks of shops and flats were erected.

In his annual report (Appendix G) the Director of Housing Construction records very fully the operations of the Housing Division for the year ended 31st March, 1948.

#### PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Although naturally pleased with the housing record achieved during the past year, the Government is fully aware that the performance in house construction has been attained to a great extent at a sacrifice to other building projects. This has been deliberate policy, because the available man-power and materials must of necessity be directed to works on the highest priority, and highest of these is housing. Nevertheless, high priority has been given to hydro-electric projects, education buildings, and hospitals.