

administration of Maori housing and the facilities offered for the employment of Maoris in the various building trades. Methods of operation vary in the different districts, workmen being engaged on both a wage and labour contract basis, while private contractors have also been employed in the various activities.

The widespread engagement of semi-skilled and trainee labour has in many cases resulted in labour costs being excessive when compared with experienced and skilled workmen. Although this aspect of construction has given cause for concern at times, it is felt that the experiment of employing semi-skilled Maori workmen to such a large extent has served a useful purpose in establishing the Maoris in permanent trade employment, to the ultimate benefit of their status in industry.

In some cases the employment of semi-skilled Maori tradesmen has resulted in criticism of the workmanship, but there is evidence of a marked improvement in the standard of work as a result of the trade experience of the employees.

In view of the difficulties of interesting contractors and qualified tradesmen in undertaking work in rural communities and Maori settlements, it is considered that a wider use of the labour resources of the Maori people will be necessary in order to undertake the large housing-construction programme ahead. To this end, arrangements have recently been completed for offering more attractive wage conditions to working foremen in order that a nucleus of skilled tradesmen can be provided for the works management and trade training of semi-skilled and unskilled Maori workmen and the keeping of a reasonable economic balance in labour costs. Experience gained with the Department's building organization will gradually equip Maori tradesmen for promotion to the supervisory and technical branches of the organization.

An agreement exists with the Rehabilitation Department whereby all Maori trade trainees are given the opportunity of employment with this Department's building organization. While there can be no compulsion in the post placement of trainees with this Department—and many trainees prefer to take private employment in town areas in preference to country work—Maori housing has benefited by recruitment from the Government trade training schools. The number of rehabilitation trade trainees employed by the Department as at 31st March, 1948, approximated 37.

A trade training plan has been devised which will enable the Department to offer a training scheme for many Maori youths who may be desirous of embarking on trade careers.

At 31st March, 1948, the number of Maori youths employed by the building organization was 30. Provision is made in the departmental estimates for (a) board and lodging allowances to be paid to youths who are required to live away from home in the course of their employment; (b) advances for the purchase of tools of trade where required by workmen; and (c) offsetting trade instruction duties of foremen against their normal productive work on construction projects. The number of departmental workmen employed at 31st March, 1948, was 266, and these were engaged in the carpentry, painting, bricklaying, and plastering trades. In addition, the number of private contractors and sub-contractors operating at 31st March, 1948, was 20 and 60 respectively.

The district supervisory staff comprises 11 Building Supervisors, 13 Overseers, and 2 salaried foremen tradesmen operating in defined zones. Plans for the expansion and further zoning of the technical staff, involving further appointments, are under consideration.

Building activities covered a wide range of construction work, as indicated earlier in this report. In particular, the Department is operating in close liaison with the Education Department in the East Coast Maori school building programme, in which some major post-primary projects are pending.