

In order to facilitate field operations, major works centres have been established at Rotorua and Gisborne where the Department is undertaking the production of joinery, concrete and plaster products, and the handling of timber-supplies. These activities have opened a wider range of trade employment and training for Maoris, the Rotorua Centre already being in operation for the manufacture of roofing-tiles and concrete products. In both centres joinery-production will be commenced shortly. It is proposed to establish similar centres in other districts on a scale according to the district needs, particularly at Hawera, where the buildings required for workshop practice are already available.

Stores depots are well established throughout each district, the major centres being Auckland, Rotorua, Gisborne, Hastings, Manunui, Hawera, Wanganui, and Levin. Subsidiary stores are located at Kaikohe, Whangarei, Hamilton, Whakaangi (Te Araroa), and Huramua (Wairoa), while smaller holding stores are located in several localities. A site has been purchased at Wairoa for the establishment of office premises and a works centre, and the preliminary plans for these have already been prepared.

Operations have been affected in varying degrees by the material-supply position, particularly in regard to timber, steel, cement, galvanized iron, roofing, and rain-water tanks. Fittings such as fuel ranges, baths, and general sanitary ware have also been in short supply, resulting in the occupation of many houses being delayed. With the assistance of the Supply and Works authorities, temporary relief has been obtained in many cases, but it is important for the progress of building-works that regular supplies be forthcoming.

During the year consideration has been given to the reorganization of the Stores Division, and the appointment of a Stores Officer was made for the purpose of overhauling and re-establishing the Stores Division on a basis to meet increased building activities.

Timber-supplies have again given cause for concern, particularly in North Auckland, East Coast, Hawke's Bay, and southern districts. As a result of negotiations with millers undertaking new cutting-rights on Maori-owned timber lands, agreements for supply have been made for the purpose of alleviating the shortage. The full result of these agreements has not yet been felt, but the position on the east coast has shown a marked improvement. Supplies in North Auckland are subject to marked seasonal fluctuation, this zone being supplied mainly from managed forests. Consideration is being given to arranging supplies from central North Island areas.

It is evident that with the wide territorial coverage of the Department's activity the timber-supply position can be solved only by the wider establishment of timber-yards for bulk purchase, handling, and distribution on a scale similar to that already operating at Rotorua, Whakaangi, Gisborne, and Hastings.

In view of the general difficulties of supply, the use of alternative materials and construction has been adopted, and this has resulted in unavoidable cost increases. Further application of alternative materials will be necessary if progress in building is to be maintained.

Recent amendments to the lending conditions for Maori housing have enabled more attention to be given to the planning and design of houses. Under the earlier lending policy, financial restrictions dictated by the limited financial means of the applicants in some instances prevented the housing needs of the people being adequately met. The revision of the lending policy has enabled a bigger and better standard of home to be provided, and the applicant is now able to spread repayments over a term up to thirty years, as compared with the original term of approximately fifteen years and less.