

of pipe which it is proposed to lay through Upper Hutt. Every possible avenue is being explored to obtain further steel, of which over 9,000 tons is required for the 33 miles of pipe-line between the Hutt River and Karori. However, the supply position is now showing some improvement and it is hoped that better progress will be made during the coming year.

SOIL CONSERVATION AND RIVERS CONTROL

The steady progress recorded in soil conservation and river control work last year has been maintained during this year. Since no new catchment districts have been constituted, this can be attributed to the increasing efficiency of the organizations built up by existing Boards. The major portion of the expenditure comprises smaller river control and drainage works, with the latter occupying an increasingly important place. In these works the procedure whereby the control of minor works has been decentralized has proved most effective and Catchment Boards have been quick to take advantage of this concession. Moreover, they have responded in a most encouraging manner to the maintenance subsidies offered, and it is believed that the better standard of work will ultimately result in a reduction of the expenditure required on capital works.

The only major river control project completed during the year was the channel improvement and banking on the lower reaches of the Otaki. At the same time proposals have been approved for a number of other major river-works, including the Motueka, Tauherenikau, and Waipaoa, and the Oxford-to-the-sea control scheme and drainage. Investigations for further similar works are well advanced.

Soil conservation work, particularly in the upper catchments of many of our larger rivers and streams, is a vital responsibility of the Council to which the highest possible priority must be accorded. Several Catchment Boards are taking advantage of subsidies for tree-planting and gully-control work and at the same time assisting farmers with advice on their individual problems. The Council itself has carried out experimental and demonstration work on its own reserves and has been instrumental in having several problem areas retired from farming for afforestation or natural regeneration. Nevertheless, progress in general has been somewhat disappointing, and cannot be expected to improve until sufficient staff has been trained to handle this work effectively. Facilities are available at Lincoln College, but the number offering is too small to appreciably affect the situation for some years. As considerable areas of the upper catchments are under the control of the Lands Department, the State Forest Service, and the Department of Maori Affairs, a major contribution could result from their active participation in overcoming this major problem.

Negotiations for the constitution of additional catchment districts are proceeding there being hearings before the Local Government Commission concerning the Wellington, Waikato, and Bay of Plenty districts. In the cases of Wellington and the Bay of Plenty, objections received to the provisional schemes are under consideration; and the Waikato hearing has been adjourned at the request of the Commission to enable them to consider the submissions for the Auckland and North Auckland districts in conjunction with those for Waikato. The Otago Catchment Board, which was constituted last year, was elected during this year, and held its first meeting in November, 1948. This brings the number of constituted districts to a total of twelve, together with one soil conservation district, and covers 58 per cent. of the area of the country. The greatest credit is due to the Boards in operation for the manner in which they have surmounted their initial difficulties.

COAL-PRODUCTION

An appreciable contribution to coal-production has been made by the use of the Department's heavy plant on opencast mining. Work was continued at Waitawhenua, Glen Massey, Ohai, and Wangaloa, and new workings have been opened up at Hillcrest and Rotowaro.