

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

MAN-POWER

The labour force available to the building and construction industry has maintained some increase over the previous year. Details are in accordance with the figures set out hereunder :—

	1948.	1949.	Increase.	Decrease.
Works industry (excluding professional and clerical)—			Per Cent.	Per Cent.
Housing	14,015	15,620	11.5	..
Other buildings	6,020	5,960	..	1.0
Other works	10,689	11,150	4.3	..
Maintenance (all classes)	5,007	5,540	10.6	..
	35,731	38,270	7.1	..
State and State-subsidized works (excluding professional and clerical)—				
Housing (State rental, departmental, ex-servicemen settlement and Maori housing)	6,047*	6,450*	6.7	..
Other buildings	1,992	2,140	7.4	..
Other works (including maintenance)	10,016	10,230	2.1	..
	18,055	18,820	4.2	..
*Includes rehabilitation trainees	2,431	2,133

Immigration is beginning to provide increased numbers of men for the building and construction industry, and following discussions which I had during my visit overseas some further improvement in the man-power figures for the coming year can be expected. For general construction work, however, there is still a grave over-all shortage, particularly emphasized in the field of State and State-subsidized works. Special inducements are required to attract suitable labour in sufficient numbers to carry out work to which even now the Government is committed.

MATERIAL SUPPLY

A summarized appreciation of the position as it affects the principal building-materials is as follows :—

Cement

During the year production was adversely affected by recurring coal shortages, shipping difficulties, and plant overhauls. The demand from hydro-electric development schemes increased, necessitating considerable tonnages being made available to allow reasonable progress on these important works. Even with assured coal-supplies, local production will be inadequate to meet the requirements of all cement-consuming interests for the next two years at least. Relief will be afforded by the arrival, at intervals during these years, of shipments of imported cement. Nevertheless, meantime it will be necessary to continue rationing through local end-use committees to ensure equity in distribution until the extensions to the local cement-works are operating in late 1951 or early 1952.

Bricks

The brick position has been difficult owing to the lack of adequate coal-supplies and suitable labour. In Wellington the situation has required control being exercised over the sale and distribution of bricks to ensure available supplies being used on the most essential works, mainly housing.