

GENERAL REPORT.

Shortly after the disastrous earthquake in Hawke's Bay the Government set up a Building Regulations Committee, of which the personnel comprised—

Professor J. E. L. Cull, Professor of Civil Engineering, Canterbury College (Chairman);
 Mr. A. G. Bush, Borough Engineer, Lower Hutt;
 Mr. R. A. Campbell, structural engineer, Christchurch;
 Mr. J. Fletcher, Fletcher Construction Co., Auckland;
 Mr. J. W. Graham, builder and contractor, Christchurch;
 Mr. G. A. Hart, City Engineer, Wellington;
 Mr. J. T. Mair, Government Architect;
 Mr. A. S. Mitchell, architect and engineer, Wellington;
 Mr. W. L. Newnham, designing engineer, Public Works Department;
 Mr. W. M. Page, architect, Wellington;
 Mr. E. H. Rhodes, structural engineer, Auckland;
 Mr. S. T. Silver, structural engineer, Wellington;
 Mr. H. Vickerman, civil engineer, Wellington.

Secretary: Dr. M. A. F. Barnett, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

The Committee was given no detailed terms of reference, but was instructed to prepare a report embodying such recommendations as it thought fit, with a view to improving the standard of building-construction in the Dominion in relation to earthquake-resistance. The need for such an improvement was vividly illustrated in the appalling loss of life and property as a result of the Hawke's Bay earthquake. The Committee also advised the Government in connection with immediate building problems arising in Hawke's Bay, as a direct result of the earthquake.

The first formal meeting of the Committee was held on the 21st February, and in all it has met for thirteen full days. In addition, there have been many meetings of sub-committees, mainly of Wellington members. Through its members the Committee has kept in close touch with the views of the building interests outside, and has received many important suggestions and recommendations, notably from the Institute of Architects, the Federated Builders and Contractors' Industrial Association of Employers, the cement companies, the Brick-manufacturers' Association, and the Sawmillers' Federation, as well as from architects and engineers in private practice. The recently formed Incorporated Clerks-of-Works Association also proffered assistance, but too late for the Committee to avail itself of the offer. Any further recommendations received, however, will still be given careful consideration in the final drafting of the proposed Dominion Building Code.

The immediate concern of the Committee was the collection of data before the value of the evidence was reduced through the demolition work going on in the devastated area. Arrangements were made with the Public Works Department for plans of typical buildings and photographs to be collected. Two valuable reports were supplied—one, prepared by Mr. Brodie, covering the damage in Hastings, and the other, compiled by Mr. Harris, dealing with the damage in Napier. Both these gentlemen are officers of the Public Works Department. These two reports are reproduced in Appendix III.

It was important, in the second instance, to exercise control over the restoration work and erection of new buildings in the Hawke's Bay area. In consultation with the appropriate Government Departments, it was arranged to issue, by a Proclamation, the fundamental rules which should govern the design of buildings erected under the restoration programme. In the meantime, technical officers of the Public Works Department were made available to give the requisite help to the local bodies.

General Earthquake Building By-law.—The Committee was then confronted with the problem of what immediate action should be taken to ensure that the buildings in course of design in other parts of New Zealand should be built to a better standard than that prevailing in the past. It was recommended, as a first step, that legislation should be brought down during the emergency session of Parliament virtually requiring municipalities to make a by-law ensuring that buildings shall be designed to withstand a definite horizontal acceleration. This was introduced in section 41 of the Finance Act, 1931 (No. 2). At the same time, it was recommended that more comprehensive legislation should be introduced during the next session.