

CHAPTER XVII.—CONSTRUCTION

CONSPECTUS

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The purpose of this Chapter is to co-ordinate such official statistics on the construction industry as are available and to give, so far as possible, a complete picture of construction from year to year. Official statistics, although constantly undergoing improvement, have many gaps and it is necessary to try to bridge these by presenting data from outside sources. For instance, Section 3 carries official figures of building permits issued in leading cities. These figures are useful but have definite limitations and are supplemented by presenting data from outside sources. This Section also contains data from a private source on construction contracts awarded during specified years. These are in the nature of a forecast of the amount of construction work contemplated in a given year. It is usually some time after contracts are awarded that work actually starts and, in the case of contracts of large-scale undertakings, the work is seldom finished within one year.

On the other hand, the official statistics of the annual Census of Construction given in Section 4 cover work of all kinds actually completed in a given year but even the Census of Construction is not all-inclusive. Work done by farmers, which in the aggregate must be considerable, is not included nor is much of that done by railways and other public institutions. So far as the latter groups are concerned an attempt is made in Section 4 to calculate a net figure which, when added to the annual Census of Construction figure, will more nearly approximate total construction (except that done by farmers and other individuals for themselves).

Section 1.—The Government and the Construction Industry

Subsection 1.—Public Contracts

Previous to the Second World War, Federal Government contracts were let and put into execution by the Department of Public Works. During the War, the Department of Munitions and Supply was organized to co-ordinate the industrial effort and arrange priority for such industries as were engaged on important war work. After 1946, the Department of Munitions and Supply gave place to the Department of Reconstruction and Supply and since that date Government reconstruction programs, so far as they concern construction projects, have been screened by this body which works in close co-operation in this matter with the Department of Public Works and other Federal Departments concerned. This ensures the initiation of only those new projects which do not interfere with more necessary construction in progress or contemplated, and where availability of labour and materials permits.