

It is to be regretted that the policy of regional planning could not have been instituted at a time more favourable to the commencement of some of the major projects which have been described. Some time must elapse before this position is reached, but in the meantime many of the more urgent projects are being reviewed by the Ministry of Works, with the assistance of Government Departments concerned, so that there will be no delay when man-power and materials become available for construction to commence.

WORKS AND PLANNING LEGISLATION

The legislation under which this office is required to function includes the Ministry of Works Act, 1943, the Public Works Act, 1928, the Main Highways Act, 1922, the Town-planning Act, 1926, the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act, 1941, the Housing Improvement Act, 1945, and their numerous amendments, some of which are normal Amendment Acts, while others are included in the Statutes Amendment, Finance, and other enactments that were convenient at the time.

Statutes and subordinate legislation affecting the control of building-materials and labour and the welfare of the building industry generally are important in the administration of this office. So, too, are enactments such as the Land Subdivision in Counties Act, 1946, and the various Acts constituting and empowering local authorities and delegates of the Crown to undertake public works and affecting the development of any town or region.

This mass of legislation reflects the reactions of several generations of legislators to the problems of their times, and approaches to the same problem by different Departments from different directions, coupled with the difficulty of getting a clear view on account of the diverse amendments, have sometimes resulted in parallels, omissions, and lack of clarity.

Better co-ordination of constructional and developmental activities should follow the review and correlation of these statutes, and consideration is being given to the directions in which administrative improvements might be achieved by this means.

GENERAL INVESTIGATION

Throughout the year investigations have been carried out on behalf of Treasury into proposals within the engineering and building fields involving the expenditure of State funds. Similar investigations have also been carried out on behalf of separate Ministers of the Crown. Many of the proposals examined have been for works of substantial character involving the expenditure of large sums of public money.

In these investigations the advice of all Government Departments has been readily available, and full acknowledgment is made of the assistance they have given in this respect.

The staff of Treasury is being further increased to provide facilities for economic studies which will be availed of by the Ministry of Works in the review of major developmental proposals now being undertaken. There is still a lack of information in regard to such questions as immigration, population distribution, industrial development and location, employment types and distribution, financial relationship between Central Government and local government, &c., required to provide adequate background for the justification for many of the larger projects now advanced in the proposal form which, if approved, will represent a heavy charge on public funds.