

the Ministry detailed information concerning the labour force available to the works industry, both on a locality and occupational classification. Desirable information relating to material supply is also obtained from within the Service and direct from industry. It was against this background that the 1947-48 works programme was prepared, and a similar approach has been made to the State and State-subsidized works programme for the current year.

The works programme prepared for the financial year which ended on 31st March, 1948, was the first of its kind. Hitherto, Government Departments were permitted to make independent representations to Cabinet through their respective Ministers and the Treasury. Such methods are now replaced by a more orderly procedure for preparing the financial estimates, thus ensuring that the money appropriated by Parliament each year for works is more in keeping with the capacity of the industry to undertake the works provided for in the annual estimates during the same year as that for which the money is appropriated. Further reasons which support the present method is the necessity of preventing undesirable competition between Government Departments for the limited availability of man-power and material resources available to the building-construction industry.

Having carefully examined our physical achievements under the 1947-48 works programme, my views in favour of the preparation of annual works programmes are considerably strengthened, as not only has it assisted in applying the man-power and material resources available for State and State-subsidized works to those works of highest priority, both in regard to desirability and practicability, and also in regard to national and regional requirements, but it has also prevented State works of a comparatively low priority competing with private-enterprise works which are regarded by the Building Controller as urgent and essential. Hence it will be agreed that benefits to be derived by systematic programming of State and State-subsidized works annually according to priority and in relation to the availability of man-power and materials are not limited to those works. Therefore, programming on this basis is beneficial to the whole industry. Such results could not be achieved by the old method, under which the preparation of the annual estimates for works expenditure had little or no relation to the capacity of the building and construction industry.

### GENERAL INVESTIGATIONS

In so far as investigations are concerned, the past year was a very busy one. Several major Government Departments having produced their plans for post-war development, the Ministry of Works was called upon to investigate these proposals and report thereon to Treasury and Cabinet. These plans include many individual projects involving the expenditure of very large sums of Government funds; therefore, investigations are not limited to the examination of their desirability and physical practicability, but must include a thorough study of the economics of such proposals. These investigations are closely associated with the ten-year schedules of works announced by you, as the development plans of the Departments concerned form an integral part of those schedules.

To this end the Ministry's functions have developed an even closer association with the Treasury than hitherto, as during the past year the requisite qualified staff were appointed in the latter Department to investigate the economics of developmental expansion as proposed by various Government Departments. Not only will the economic and physical investigations be confined to specific plans for these Departments, but the first step has been taken in the preliminary work associated with the necessary comprehensive investigation into all classes of developmental undertakings envisaged for all parts of the Dominion.