

The Ministry of Works was set up for the purpose of surveying the post-war proposals of all Government Departments, of local authorities, and, so far as is possible, of private interests. The purpose of the survey was to ensure that works which were needed first obtained the necessary materials and labour, that major construction proposals did not conflict in interest, in timing, or physical location, and that the huge post-war demands for buildings and developmental works, plus heavy arrears of maintenance, were met on an ordered basis. The Ministry of Works, therefore, is primarily concerned with the planning of works, the allocation of priorities, the supply of materials and labour, and the inauguration of projects in which the Government has a major interest. It is charged also with the responsibility of ensuring that where State funds and, to some extent, other public moneys, are involved, works are properly designed and are efficiently prosecuted to time within the limits of the Government's financial approval. For this reason it is required to examine generally each proposal from a technical as well as from an economic point of view, and to be satisfied that major engineering decisions are properly taken, and that the works, when approved for construction, are carried out in accordance with approved plans.

It will be seen, therefore, that the Ministry of Works covers a field much wider than that of the Public Works Department, and in future the annual report on the operations of the Department will be submitted by the Commissioner of Works, with individual reports on the operations of each Division, and the reports of the Main Highways Board and Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council and other statements, as usual, submitted as Appendices. In view of the much wider scope to be covered by future reports, and in view also of the change in my designation from "Minister of Public Works" to "Minister of Works," it is only fitting that this statement should in future be known as the "Ministry of Works Statement."

During the period under review steps have been taken to give effect to the intention expressed by me in the Public Works Statement for last year that I would, as soon as it was possible to do so, make known the Government's proposals in regard to major development works, particularly in the four main metropolitan centres.

A considerable amount of investigation was carried out by the Planning Division of the Ministry of Works who were engaged on the preparation of a long-range programme of works, with the result that I was able, shortly before the close of the year under review, to make a public announcement disclosing the Government's major works proposals in respect of the Hutt Valley, Tawa Flat, Porirua, and Titahi Bay districts. Since the end of the financial year further notices were gazetted, and public announcements made in respect to other comprehensive areas throughout the country. It is interesting and encouraging to find that the policy of indicating the Government's proposals on a long-range plan, as well as the general details of the various programmes so far proclaimed, have been so well received by the public, local bodies, and the press everywhere.

I should like here to remove some misconceptions which appear to have arisen as to the meaning of these programmes. They have been referred to popularly as ten-year programmes, but it should be understood that the schedules which have been notified do not commit the Government or other authority to undertake all the works enumerated therein before the expiry of a ten-year period. It is intended that the schedules convey some indication of major construction works which are regarded as likely to require consideration within that period. Actually it will be necessary to review these proposals from time to time and to make such adjustments in priorities, &c., as may be necessary to best serve the economy of the country and accommodate movements in the labour market and availability of materials.