

is still far from complete, especially as regards the relation which it must bear to the Regional Councils and local authorities, who, by Government invitation, are now asked to take a very definite part themselves both in the development and in the application of forward plans.

#### INVESTIGATION AND REPORTS ON BEHALF OF TREASURY

The mere listing-out of large numbers of suggested projects into a preliminary order of priority is, of course, a beginning only, and before major schemes can be approved for implementation much detailed checking and examination of a technical nature must be carried out. A preliminary economic analysis of a scheme carried out by the Ministry of Works in conjunction with Treasury may reveal weaknesses in its whole conception or in the level of priority which is at first attached to it. Provided the project passes this preliminary check, detailed survey work must be carried out on the site, plans and specifications drawn up in the initiating Department, and closer estimates made of costs and quantities. To comply with the requirements of Treasury, these technical aspects must finally be checked in the Ministry of Works and the project reviewed in the light of any changes since the first estimates were made.

While a very great deal of the checking and investigational work referred to has yet to be carried out, following the initial sorting of the many thousands of projects now on record in the Ministry of Works, the current phase of technical examination has been going on steadily ever since the establishment of the office of Commissioner of Works. Very considerable economies were obtained by scrutiny of wartime proposals, and in a measure these have continued to be made as a result of the review of peacetime proposals. Over a period of time the office of the Commissioner of Works has carried out investigations into many hundreds of projects, a large proportion of them urgent, and many involving the expenditure of very large sums indeed. Many instances could be given of the savings which have been effected as a result of these checks, and the many errors arising from the lack of co-ordination which have been avoided.

The Ministry of Works generally, and in particular the Commissioner of Works, is responsible to the Minister of Finance, through Treasury, to ensure that all projects involving Government funds are sound from an economic and technical point of view and are properly carried out. In this respect the Ministry of Works acts between authorities originating proposals and the Department whose responsibility it is to find these funds and to see that they are properly expended.

#### MATERIAL SUPPLY

The accumulation of proposals relating to constructional undertakings in the Ministry of Works enables a review of the material supply position to be made in the light of a knowledge of the overall demand. Major proposals have been broken down into their critical material components and recommendations made to the Government in regard to the supply of these, either by increased production or by import from overseas. In this respect, of course, the Ministry of Works is not concerned only with Government works, but with the materials required for the whole of the building and construction industry in the country. On account of staff difficulties this responsibility which has been exercised since the defence-construction period, has not been carried out as fully as it should have been, but, with more staff becoming available, steps are being taken to put this on a more satisfactory basis.