

and, with this background of knowledge, the determination of the necessary works in priority to bring the development into effect. The problem varies from one region to another as the potentialities of each region vary, but unless a serious attempt is made to cover the Dominion on this basis it is difficult to see how any approximation can be made of future population and its location. It is not suggested that all this can be done by Regional Councils, but it can best be done by these working in the closest association with Government Departments instead of, as at the present time, local authorities and Government Departments working very largely in isolation.

There has been little criticism of the principle of regional planning, which has been on the statute-book for the last eighteen years. As you have presented it, it represents the desire of the Government to have the advice and assistance of local interests in the planning of works to benefit areas in which these interests are constituted, as distinct from works which are more national in character and for which the Government must retain primary responsibility.

In the metropolitan areas the problem is relatively simple. The need for co-ordinated planning is very evident and needs no justification, but in the more rural areas the setting-up of further reviewing authorities in the form of Regional Councils has brought up certain objections. The fact remains, however, that the Dominion has reached a stage in its development when it is no longer possible to plan ahead on the basis of representations from the very large number of local bodies, often in direct competition, and without regard to community interests or the interests of the Dominion as a whole.

There are many problems with which we are now faced, such as highway and road development, river control and soil conservation, main drainage and water-supply, railway extensions, aerodromes, harbours, zoning of industrial and housing areas, &c., which cannot be determined within local-body limits as they exist at present. The facts of the matter are that modern methods of transport and communications have altered the whole internal economy of the Dominion, and the reasons which no doubt existed in the earlier days for the setting-up of many of the smaller local authorities have now disappeared. If it were possible to arrange local-body administration more in conformity with topographical considerations, or on a basis of community of interest as this now exists, substantial savings should be possible and it should be much easier to implement a policy of regional planning.

This, no doubt, will be a matter which in due course will receive the consideration of the local Government Commission, recently set up, and until the Commission has completed its work it would be undesirable to consider the form Regional Councils will ultimately take. In the meantime, however, every assistance should be given to Regional Councils as these are now constituted to carry on, and advice offered by them in regard to developmental projects and the priorities these should take should receive every consideration. It should be remembered that, though more difficult, it is possible to plan regionally in consultation with individual local bodies and without Regional Councils. Where, therefore, these Councils are not active, steps will be taken by the Ministry of Works to ensure that all proposals coming forward for consideration from any particular region relate to the interests of the whole region, rather than to those of the particular local authority or local interest advancing the proposals. It is much more preferable, however, that proposals originating locally should be reviewed locally before submission to the Government.