

Engineering skill has so improved our motor-vehicles that we must rebuild our roads to higher standards not only to make human life safe but also to provide rapid, ample, and safe roads for the development of industries and businesses dependent upon road transport facilities; improvement in electric equipment and facilities for its use are advancing so rapidly that we are hardly keeping pace with the generation of power to meet the demand; public buildings to house our public servants are woefully inadequate and out of date; we have isolated railway systems that would not be tolerated in other countries, and we have land that can produce immeasurably more than it produces to-day. Surely it cannot be called extravagance to endeavour to build to keep pace with these necessary things? I therefore make no apology for the amount of money I am asking Parliament to provide to enable demands such as these to be met; and every penny of the money will be expended within a well-planned and far-sighted policy.

Before coming to more detailed statements concerning work done last year and the proposed work for this year in the directions I have outlined, I would particularly desire to draw attention to one thing I have already mentioned—that is, the lack of proper accommodation for public servants.

A properly planned scheme of building for adequately housing public servants has been prepared, and will be adhered to as far as possible, but some time must elapse before its full effect can be felt. In the meantime, many State Departments are working under conditions entirely insufficient to give their staffs the degree of comfort they are entitled to. The Government is most anxious, therefore, to press forward with a complete building programme, and the provision of a substantial sum of money for this purpose is more than justified.

As in former years, I wish to point out that of the total estimated expenditure by my Department of £12,757,200 for this year, a sum of £4,784,000 will be expended from revenue, representing approximately 38 per cent. of the total.

The following schedule sets out in detail the amounts for works under the control of the Minister of Public Works:—

Summary of Votes under Control of Minister of Public Works and Proposed Ways and Means of Raising the Necessary Funds, Year ending 31st March, 1939.

—	Loans.	Consolidated Fund.	Employment Promotion Fund.	Special Revenue.	Total.
	£	£	£	£	£
Departmental	198,000	20,000	2,000	..	220,000
Railway-construction ..	1,440,000	..	..	..	1,440,000
Public Buildings	1,500,000	10,000	..	30,000	1,540,000
Lighthouses and Harbour-works	46,000	..	4,000	..	50,000
Development of Tourist Resorts	50,000	..	..	..	50,000
Roads	1,410,000	..	90,000	..	1,500,000
Lands Improvement	187,000	..	113,000	..	300,000
Irrigation	140,000	..	85,000	..	225,000
Electric Supply	742,000	..	..	814,000	1,556,000
Main Highways	2,603,000	..	100,000	2,334,200	5,037,200
Consolidated Fund	..	639,000	200,000	..	839,000
Totals	8,316,000	669,000	594,000	3,178,200	12,757,200

For the current financial year 1938–39 a sum of £668,972 will be provided from the Consolidated Fund for expenditure on maintenance of public works and services. The expenditure on main highways from revenue is estimated to reach £2,677,000, and from loan-moneys £2,603,000, whilst one-third of the cost of the level-crossing-elimination programme will be met from the Employment Promotion Fund and one-sixth by the Railways Department. It is estimated that approximately £437,000 revenue from the Electric Supply Account will be available after providing for sinking fund, interest, and operating-expenses for expenditure on construction works, the balance of the year's construction programme under this heading—i.e., £742,000—will be raised by way of loans.