

Form of Public Accounts

For some years there has been discussion in this and other countries as to the most suitable form of Government accounts. I realize that it is essential to have the accounts in such a form that the actual expenditure can be compared readily with the authorizations given by Parliament. The accounts as now prepared serve this purpose, and it may be that by a judicious inclusion of summaries we can meet all requirements. Although it is not an easy matter having regard to the wide ramifications and magnitude of State activities, I would like to present the accounts in such simple form that the average taxpayer could readily understand them. I intend to have further examination made as to the practicability of making some progress in that direction without affecting comparability with the past. Meantime the accounts themselves have been issued in precisely the same detail and form as in previous years.

War Expenses Account

The War Expenses Account has been closed as from 1st April of this year, and any necessary expenditure, except by way of loans, hitherto met from that account will be met from the Consolidated Fund. To enable business and furniture loans to be arranged as heretofore £500,000 was transferred to the State Advances Corporation. The balance then remaining in the War Expenses Account—namely, £1,865,000—has been transferred to Loans Redemption Account and will be used for repayment of war debt.

This will eliminate one of the large separate accounts which has complicated the interpretation of the public accounts, and should thus bring a further measure of clarification.

I have had Table 5 prepared as an addendum to this Statement so as to provide a form of accounting history of the War Expenses Account through which, during World War II and its aftermath, nearly £749 million of expenditure has been recorded.

PUBLIC DEBT

Reference to the expense of war must remind us of public debt. At 31st March, 1950, the public debt, including approximately £26 million of suspended overseas debt, amounted to £670 million, an increase of £387·5 million since 31st March, 1936. Of the total interest bearing debt slightly under £79 million is repayable overseas, the