

It is evident that the Government is faced with a formidable task in endeavouring to overcome arrears of construction and to satisfy the demands being placed upon it from all quarters for works and buildings of every description. Unfortunately, many are prone to believe that these demands can be satisfied at once, but each year's programme must be related to the physical resources available and, further, must take cognizance of the funds available to the Government for capital construction work. These factors prevent decisions being given which would be pleasing and acceptable to all sections of the community. However, I have been careful to point out the limitations, financial and otherwise, which must be placed upon the construction programme if this is to maintain a reasonable balance with other expenditure to which the Government is committed.

By direction of the Right Hon. the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance a complete examination of the whole capital works programme was undertaken by the Ministry of Works, in association with Treasury, very shortly after the present Government took office. The proposals of all State Departments were closely examined together with all other proposals involving, directly or indirectly, the expenditure of State funds. Due allowance was made for commitments made by the outgoing Government and for works already commenced. It has been found necessary to defer many works which are in themselves desirable but which could not, from a national point of view, be considered as immediately essential. The deferment of these does not mean that they will be indefinitely postponed, but that they will come up for annual review with each year's construction programme and will be commenced as soon as conditions permit.

I have found Mr. Speaker, in going round the country, proposals advanced for developmental works of all descriptions put forward by local authorities and interested organizations without much consideration as to how these were to be financed. There has been in the past an undue reliance on the central Government. So far as local authorities are concerned I have endeavoured to point out to them that if local government in the country is to function properly local bodies must be prepared to accept greater responsibility for the works they put forward.

The Government is committed to an exceedingly heavy construction programme and, in considering works which it must carry out itself, as distinct from those of local authorities and private individuals, it is of great importance that the Government should not draw upon the limited construction potential to the detriment of these other interests. Failure to equate works rationally over the whole field of construction to the resources available to carry them out has resulted in many difficulties confronting the country at the present time.

No curtailment of major Government undertakings commenced is contemplated. These will be pushed to completion as vigorously as resources available will permit, and in this connection a special attempt will be made to accelerate the programme of hydro-electric work with a view to bringing, as soon as this is practicable, the supply of electric power more in step with the demand. There are many other works which it is recognized are necessary for the proper development of the country, and these I have already indicated will receive the fullest consideration by the Government in each year's annual review.