

an indication of this necessity I have but to point to the fact that we have one hundred and eighteen Boroughs and Cities, seventy-one Town Boards, one hundred and twenty-nine Counties, thirty-five Road Boards, fifty-nine Drainage Boards, and forty-nine River Boards, all with their separate staffs, plant, and overhead charges.

It is obvious that a very considerable percentage of these bodies could be done without and their work absorbed by the remaining local authorities.

There are also some thirty-nine Harbour Boards in existence constituted as such by special legislation, and, in addition, there are fourteen other harbours in respect of which the local authority is delegated with and carries out the powers and functions of a Harbour Board. Even some of the specially constituted Harbour Boards could have carried on satisfactorily under the administration of an existing local authority.

Possibly the time has not yet arrived for the organization of a Local Government Board, but it does seem to me that we should take into early consideration the creation of a plan whereby no local authority may proceed with the raising of a loan until the proposal has been first submitted to experts for investigation, in order to ascertain whether (a) the work proposed is sound from an engineering point of view; (b) it is justified at the cost estimated, having regard to existing services; (c) it is economically sound, having regard to its value to the district concerned and the capacity of the district to pay for it; and (d) (if applicable) it fits in and forms part of a comprehensive plan of relative works. Assuming all these factors to be answered by the expert investigators in the affirmative, and the raising of the loan concurred in by the Treasury, who would maintain a record of all public loan indebtedness, actual and prospective, the way would then be clear for the local body to submit the issue to the ratepayers, who would have an assurance which they do not have now.

In conclusion, Sir, I have, assisted by the officers of the Department, endeavoured to so direct the forces under my control and the expenditure of moneys appropriated by Parliament as to obtain twenty shillings' worth of result for every pound spent. I have to the best of my judgment carried out the works which will return the best results in aiding general Dominion prosperity and in the improvement of the conditions and producing-powers of those who are not so favourably situated as those of our citizens who carry on their activities within easy reach of the well-established markets or lines of communication. Confidently I look forward to a year of satisfactory progress, during which I will again be guided in my administration by a determination to do all that is possible to produce the greatest good for the greatest number, while at the same time not forgetting the "under dog."

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