

Geneva, September 3rd, 1934.

## LEAGUE OF NATIONS

### COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSIT ORGANISATION

## NATIONAL PUBLIC WORKS

In the report on the work of the Communications and Transit Organisation adopted at its fourteenth session, the Assembly stated that "a continuous study of general questions relating to public works financed by States themselves, without recourse to foreign capital, would make it possible to collect the information which the various Governments consider they could furnish as to the experience acquired in the different countries, particularly as regards the effects of the execution of public works or of a particular category of public works on the resumption of economic activity and on unemployment. Such information would be particularly useful in order to enable Governments to judge of the possibility and desirability of pursuing, in present circumstances, a policy of carrying out programmes of public works on parallel lines. In the present period of distress, this question cannot fail to be of particular interest to public opinion and Governments in most countries."

At its seventy-sixth session, the Council also expressed similar views and concluded "that it would certainly be useful to collect without delay any preparatory information which might be required on this matter with a view to subsequent discussion".

In order to facilitate by the collection of suitable information, as desired by the Assembly and Council, any subsequent examination of the question of public works, including national public works, the Secretary-General, in a circular letter dated March 7th, 1934, requested the Governments to communicate to him the following particulars :

I. A brief description of the main public works :

- (a) Undertaken since the beginning of the year 1929 and now completed ;
- (b) Now in course of execution ;
- (c) The execution of which is at present in contemplation or schemes for which are in preparation.

The term "public works" is intended to include the various categories of work mentioned in the list reproduced below and the public works described should, as far as possible, be classified according to the categories shown in that list.

II. The principal administrative methods followed or contemplated for the execution of the work referred to in I, and any legal provisions relating to such work.

(Has the work in question been carried out, or is it being, or to be, carried out on behalf of or by the order of a central, regional or local or other authority, or on behalf of a company holding a concession from public services, or on behalf of private persons receiving a grant from the public authorities ? Is such work being carried out directly by the authorities, or by contract, etc. ?)

III. The principal methods employed for financing such work.

(Is the expenditure on the work charged to the ordinary or the extraordinary budget of the State, the budget of regional or local administrations, the budgets of public bodies, etc., or is it financed by an internal or external loan ? Security of such loans ; plans of repayment, etc.)

IV. An estimate, as far as is possible, of the allocation of expenditure on the execution of the public works referred to in I, as between materials and equipment provided by national or foreign industries, on the one hand, and labour — that is to say, wages and miscellaneous social expenditure — on the other.

V. The Government's opinion with regard to the effects obtained or expected from the execution of the public works referred to in I on the resumption of economic and industrial activities and on unemployment.

CLASSIFICATION OF PUBLIC WORKS BY CATEGORIES.

- (a) Roads and bridges.
- (b) Railway lines, including tramways, metropolitan railways, etc. (If possible, mention the more important construction works separately.)
- (c) Complete agricultural land reclamation (drainage, irrigation, construction of dwelling-houses and various new buildings, or establishment of entire new settlements, country roads and other works connected with land settlement).
- (d) Canals and other inland waterways (including improvement work on rivers, defensive work against floods, etc.). (Work not already included under (c).)
- (e) Land improvement work, bringing of new land under cultivation, reforestation, etc. (Work not already included under (c).)
- (f) Provision of drinking-water supplies and sewage disposal. (Work not already included under (c).)
- (g) Work carried out in sea and river ports, including mechanical equipment of such ports.
- (h) Work for the establishment of air ports.
- (i) Building and construction work forming part of a general plan and carried out (or to be carried out) with the participation or approval of public authorities, classified according to category (administrative buildings, dwelling-houses, etc.). (Work not already included under (c).)
- (j) Electric installations, hydro-electric and heating power centres, motive-power transmission.
- (k) Gasworks and long-distance gas supply.
- (l) Telegraph and telephone installations, wireless broadcasting stations.
- (m) Other work.

Although the Governments were requested to send the above particulars to the Secretariat by August 15th, so that all the replies received could be submitted to the Assembly, a considerable number of Governments had not yet replied by the time the present report was drawn up. This delay is doubtless due to the lengthy period of time required for the collection of the data required as a basis for the replies, as, indeed, is clear from some preliminary communications which have reached the Secretariat.

A detailed account of the information contained in the replies received will be published shortly, but it appeared advisable to inform the Assembly now of the general position of the question by means of a short summary of the replies which have already reached the Secretariat.

Up to the present, the Governments of the following countries have replied to the circular letter of March 7th, 1934 : Union of South Africa, United States of America, Australia, Belgium, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, France, Haiti, India, Iraq, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Poland, Portugal, Salvador, Switzerland, Turkey, Yugoslavia.

Of these replies, those from the Governments of the following countries alone deal with the substance of the question :

*Australia.*

The reply communicates the information furnished by New South Wales and Tasmania.

New South Wales sends a brief description of the public works carried out under the auspices of the Unemployment Relief Council, together with a list of the various categories of works, the expenditure incurred in respect of each category being specified. The reply also contains detailed particulars of the administrative organisation of those works and the methods of financing employed, and specifies the amount of the credits allocated thereto.

Information is furnished regarding the Emergency Relief Work Scheme and the conditions under which this scheme is to be carried out, the relevant legislative texts being attached. Lastly, the number of unemployed engaged in these works is also given.

The reply states that fuller particulars will be sent later ; these will be collected by the competent departments entrusted with the practical execution of the works.

Tasmania communicates a list giving particulars of the aggregate expenditure incurred in respect of the various categories of works carried out (roads and bridges, railways, sea and river ports) together with brief information regarding the organisation of the works and the methods of financing employed.

*Belgium.*

The reply is divided into four parts, dealing respectively with public works of the following categories :

- (a) Roads. — Brief particulars of the credits, spread over five years, allocated to special reconditioning of State roads ; general information concerning other (normal) road works and their administrative and financial organisation.

(b) Waterways. — Full particulars of the “large-scale works” coming within the province of the “Fonds spécial de grands travaux”, an autonomous public undertaking set up in 1928 to carry out, on behalf and for account of the State, certain specific large-scale works. The sums at the disposal of this fund and the expenditure incurred or contemplated in respect of these works are mentioned.

General information regarding the expenditure incurred each year in respect of ordinary and extraordinary hydraulic works, the following two categories of works being shown separately : canals and rivers, ports and coasts. These works include, *inter alia*, dykes and flood-protection works, improvement works, dredging, etc.

(c) Building. — List of the principal works carried out in this category, together with brief particulars of the method employed for financing them.

(d) 1. Electricity. — Very full particulars, in accordance with the questionnaire, concerning schemes for the construction of electric installations, hydro-electric and heating power stations and motive-power transmission stations which have been completed, are being carried out, or are projected, together with a map of Belgium showing the position of those works. Detailed list of the works in question and of their characteristics. Relevant legislative provisions.

(d) 2. Gas. — Particulars, in the same form as those relating to electricity, of gasworks and long-distance gas supply, together with a list of gas suppliers for each of the principal supply systems, and a map.

#### *United Kingdom.*

The Government feel some difficulty in answering the questionnaire in detail, by reason of the large number and wide diversity of the works normally carried out in the country by the central and local authorities, in addition to the special programmes undertaken between 1929 and 1931 with a view to providing work for the unemployed. The Government also consider that details confined to the period since 1929 would create a misleading impression, as they would fail to disclose the intense activity displayed at an earlier date, as regards both the execution of normal programmes and of special programmes prior to 1929.

The reply contains general information as to the total expenditure incurred since 1919 on housing, road schemes and telephone development. The execution of these works is being continued. A large number of different schemes have also been carried out by means of the grants made by the Unemployment Grants Committee set up for this purpose. The power of this Committee to make State grants has now expired, however.

In addition to these major works, a large number of smaller schemes have been carried out, usually with State aid or guarantees, by local authorities and public companies and undertakings ; these schemes related to land settlement, land drainage, fishery harbours, rural water supply, assistance for colonial development, etc.

The reply also gives general information as to the administrative organisation of the works and the methods employed for financing them. It likewise contains estimates of the amount of employment provided by the execution of these works.

In conclusion, the Government, while proposing to continue the normal execution of public works of value to the community, confirm their opinion, already expressed on several occasions during the discussions of the question of international public works, that the experiment of large-scale public works as a method of dealing with unemployment has not produced the results anticipated, and that, in these circumstances, they do not propose to repeat it.

#### *Bulgaria.*

The Government has sent five lists, containing information furnished by the various departments concerned, and dealing with :

(a) Roads and bridges. — Construction and reconditioning ; summary statement of expenditure on material and labour during the period 1929-1934.

(b) Water supply. — Same particulars as under (a).

(c) Public buildings. — List of the various categories of buildings erected since 1929 or in process of construction, with particulars of expenditure on material and labour, together with certain general information regarding the execution of these works and the number of days' work provided.

(d) Construction of tramways. — A brief account of the work done on the Sofia tramway system — lines and buildings — together with figures of expenditure on material and labour.

(e) Distribution of land to farmers. — Brief particulars of what the State has done in this respect for peasants unprovided or insufficiently provided with land as a contribution to the campaign against unemployment.

#### *Estonia.*

The reply gives an account of the organisation and co-ordination of the public works undertaken with a view to reducing unemployment, more especially through the creation of a Special Central Fund with its own Board of Management, the functions of which include the



distribution of the available funds among governmental and non-governmental bodies. Particulars of the numbers of unemployed engaged upon public works during the last ten years ; number of days' work provided ; rules governing the engagement of unemployed for public works.

There are also tables enumerating the various public works completed, in progress or projected, together with general information on this subject, including a statement of the expenditure entailed in each case and the number of days' work provided. The list includes the following categories of works : roads and bridges, railways, agricultural improvements and land reclamation, inland waterways, aqueducts and drainage, ports, air ports, various buildings, electrical installations, gas-works, telegraphs, telephones and wireless.

#### *Finland.*

The reply describes the organisation by the State and municipalities both of unrelated public works specially undertaken with a view to the relief of unemployment, and known as "relief works", and also of those described as "emergency public works", which correspond more closely to the purposes mentioned in the questionnaire, as they are designed, amongst other things, to attenuate the depression itself.

Particulars of the numbers of unemployed in Finland for the various years under consideration, together with the number of unemployed engaged upon relief works ; funds used for each category of these works.

Detailed list of the various works already completed or now in progress in pursuance of the "emergency public works" programme, with particulars of expenditure. The list deals more especially with the following categories : roads and bridges, railways, miscellaneous building, improvement of watercourses and facilities for navigation, orders placed with industrial enterprises and municipal workshops, land improvements, land reclamation and forestry, land settlement.

#### *France.*

The Government has, in the first place, communicated a general note regarding the works undertaken with a view to relieving unemployment. It states the amount of the funds appropriated for this purpose, as also for the improvement of national technical equipment, together with the manner in which they have been apportioned among the budgets of the various Ministries.

General particulars of the organisation and financing both of normal public works and of those undertaken for the sole purpose of providing work for the unemployed ; list of the various decrees on this subject, with special reference to State subsidies.

Works specially undertaken to reduce unemployment and carried out both by the departments and municipalities have included the following categories : miscellaneous building, road improvements, land reclamation, water supplies, various town-planning works, rural electrification, improvements in pasturage, forestry, etc. ; particulars of the total expenditure incurred on the aforementioned works, the amount spent on wages and number of days' work provided.

In the last place, this general note contains particulars of the scheme of major works designed to reduce unemployment which the Government now proposes to carry out by drawing on the Guarantee Fund and Capitalisation Funds set up under the Social Insurance Law. Particulars are given of the funds available and the general organisation of this scheme, more particularly through the creation of a National Board for Major Unemployment Relief Works, which has already entered upon its duties.

The Government also supplies more detailed particulars of works connected with roads and bridges, telegraph and telephone installations and wireless broadcasting stations.

(a) Roads and bridges. — Detailed particulars of the work done on the system of "national roads" under the direct authority of the Ministry of Public Works. Total expenditure ; expenditure on labour ; number of workers employed.

List of the more important roads and bridges built in the course of recent years or at present in process of construction. Particulars of the future programme of works. Statement regarding the organisation of the work and the methods by which it is financed.

(b) Telegraphs, telephones, wireless. — The more important works carried out by the Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, with special reference to buildings and installations of various kinds (cables, exchanges, systems, etc.), together with particulars of the expenditure on labour and other items given separately in respect of each class of works. The list of these works is followed by detailed particulars of their organisation and financing. It is pointed out that, as the programme of major works undertaken with a view to modernising the equipment of the posts, telegraphs and telephones is now largely completed, the annual amount of such work will show a considerable decrease in the next few years.

According to the French Government's reply, further particulars may be expected with regard to the works mentioned under the other points of the questionnaire.

#### *Haili.*

The Government has supplied copies of the annual reports of the Directorate-General of Public Works for the years 1927-28 to 1931-32, which give particulars of the various public works carried out and, more particularly, information regarding the organisation and activities

of the General Public Works Administration and its various sub-sections : Public Buildings ; Municipal Engineering ; Lighting and Distribution of Electrical Power ; Irrigation ; Roads, Bridges and Tracks ; Maritime Works ; Warehouses, Workshops and Transport ; Telephones, Telegraphs and Wireless ; Studies and Surveys.

Description of all the works executed ; detailed statement of expenditure ; balance-sheet of all funds entrusted to the Directorate-General of Public Works and distribution of these funds between the various services.

#### *India.*

The Government states that it is not in a position to give accurate information as to the extent of unemployment. Moreover, the character of some of the largest public works, such as the great irrigation projects, would not justify their inclusion among those falling within the scope of the questionnaire, as they were undertaken many years before the depression — in some cases as long ago as 1919-20 — with which they have no direct connection.

In other respects, the Government would be able to supply only a part of the information requested in the questionnaire. Such being the case, it has refrained from communicating the incomplete data at its disposal pending a communication from the Secretariat on this subject.

In reply, the Government of India was requested to supply any particulars, however incomplete, which it might have at its disposal regarding points raised in the questionnaire.

#### *Iraq.*

The Government has supplied a detailed statement regarding the various schemes included in the national programme of public works, the application of which was begun in 1929 and which includes the following categories :

(a) Roads and bridges. — Brief description of building operations on various roads and bridges, together with a statement of expenditure in each case.

(b) Hydraulic works. — Brief description of various works relating to irrigation, drainage, water supplies, flood protection works, etc., with a statement of the expenditure involved in the case of each separate undertaking.

(c) Air ports. — Brief description of the works already completed.

(d) Buildings. — List of the various buildings already constructed, with a separate statement of expenditure in each case.

(e) Telegraphs and telephones. — List of the various telephone lines already put up, telegraph and telephone cables laid, exchanges equipped, etc.

(f) Other works. — Enumeration of other classes of works already carried out.

#### *Luxemburg.*

The reply includes a list of the various works completed, in progress or projected (revetment, widening and general improvement of corners, road straightening, bridges, water supplies, mains, abolition of level-crossings, special motor-traffic roads), with a separate statement of expenditure in respect of each category. The reply also gives certain general particulars of the administrative organisation and the financing of the works in question, with special reference to State subsidies. Lastly, an estimate is given of the distribution of the total expenditure as between material and equipment on the one hand and labour on the other hand, in respect of the various categories of works.

#### *Nicaragua.*

The Government has supplied a detailed list of the various public works carried out since 1929 or now in progress. It includes the following categories : roads of various kinds (stating the length of each road), hydraulic works, railways (stating the length of each line), buildings and edifices of various kinds, with brief particulars of their general character and the materials employed.

#### *Netherlands.*

The reply contains general particulars of the organisation of the public works undertaken by the State and municipalities, with a view mainly to providing work for the unemployed. The reply gives the aggregate number of unemployed engaged upon the various works undertaken (canals, roads, sports grounds, sewers, land clearing and drainage), together with the funds appropriated for the purpose. Lastly, it is proposed to create a special fund in 1935 with a view to financing these works.

#### *Portugal.*

The Government has supplied a number of detailed statements drawn up by the various departments concerned with public works. These statements contain very detailed information as requested by the questionnaire in regard to the various categories of public works undertaken — viz. :

(a) Roads and bridges. — Particulars of the extent of the works carried out.

(b) Railways. — Complete list of the works undertaken, with particulars of their organisation and financing, more especially through the creation of a special Railways Fund.

(c) Hydraulic works for agriculture. — The relevant information is embodied in a booklet entitled “Short Account of the Achievements of the Autonomous Association of Hydraulic Works for Agriculture”, to which certain explanations are added. The booklet gives a short description of all the works completed, in progress or projected.

(d) Canals and rivers. — Brief particulars of the various kinds of works completed and proposed, with information regarding their organisation and financing, together with the total expenditure incurred.

(e) Water supplies. — List of the works carried out, with particulars of their organisation, more especially through the creation of a special fund; separate statement of expenditure in respect of each group.

(f) Ports. — List and description of the works undertaken, with a plan; information on organisation and financing, particulars of the funds appropriated and also of the expenditure on each separate undertaking.

(g) Buildings. — List of the works carried out, together with general information regarding their organisation and financing.

(h) Telegraphs, telephones, wireless. — Particulars are given of the length of telegraph and telephone lines laid down, together with a brief account of broadcasting stations already built or projected, also certain administrative and financial information and a statement of the total expenditure on each group of works.

The Government intimates in its reply that particulars of other public works may subsequently be supplied.

#### *Salvador.*

The Government has communicated certain general particulars of the position in regard to public works in Salvador. It is explained, for example, that, in so small a country, there can be no really extensive public works, and that those carried out have no appreciable effect on the unemployment problem. Certain general information is added regarding the administrative organisation and financing of road-building and certain other and less important categories of works.

#### *Switzerland.*

The Government has transmitted a report drawn up by the Industries, Arts and Crafts and Labour Office of the Federal Public Economy Department. The report is accompanied by a number of maps and the texts of laws regarding schemes for unemployment relief and subsidies in aid of relief works, together with a report by the Federal Posts and Railways Department.

These reports contain very detailed information, together with the various particulars mentioned in the questionnaire in respect both of normal public works and of so-called “relief works” already completed, in process of execution or projected by the Confederation, cantons and municipalities. The works in question fall into the following categories :

(a) Railways. — Installations of various kinds in respect of the permanent way, bridges, buildings, signalling system, etc., of the Federal railways; electrification of lines and work in connection therewith; purchase of rolling-stock for the Federal railways. Similar particulars in respect of other Swiss railways.

(b) Canals and other inland waterways and river ports. — General particulars of the works carried out.

(c) Air ports. — Miscellaneous works and installations at the country's air ports.

(d) Administrative buildings. — Brief description of the more important works.

(e) Electrical installations. — Some general information regarding this class of works.

(f) Gasworks. — Same particulars as under (e).

(g) Telephonic and telegraphic installations, broadcasting stations. — Brief description of the principal works.

The reply also includes a statement in respect of each category of works of the expenditure borne by the Confederation, either directly or by means of subsidies, together with that borne by the cantons and municipalities.

In conclusion, the reply transmits the information supplied by the Director of Building at the Federal Department of the Interior relating mainly to the constitution of a Central Works Co-ordination Board, the activities of which are devoted more especially to the seasonal distribution of public works. This Board will, however, be shortly absorbed by a new Federal body now in process of organisation — the Central Board for the Provision of Employment — which will investigate the problem of public works in all its aspects and co-ordinating such works throughout the country.



The Federal Council is at present considering the possibility of attempting to reduce unemployment by the promotion of new public works and is expected to submit a scheme to the Legislative Councils by the end of the year.

*Turkey.*

The reply states that, as unemployment has not assumed serious proportions in Turkey, the Government has not felt impelled to draw up any large-scale plan of public works for the purpose of reviving economic activity. It is therefore unable to reply to the questionnaire.

*Yugoslavia.*

The Government has sent a brief list showing the work of various kinds carried out by the War Ministry for the equipment of the country's civil air ports. The reply announces the subsequent despatch of information from the other departments concerned — viz., responsible for public works, communications, social welfare and public health.

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In addition to the above-mentioned replies to the questionnaire, the Governments of the *Union of South Africa*, *United States of America* and *Poland* have sent preliminary communications stating that full replies will be sent in the near future as soon as the necessary information can be collected by the competent services.

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