1953 Dominica Estimates.

A REVIEW

I.

LIKE a country's statistics, its annual fiscal budget is made up of mostly a mass of figures, classified and tabulated in some pre-arranged form that facilitates comparison, contrast, etc. But these figures, in each case, tell a story—a story of delightful prospects or of depressing revelations or, perhaps, just of sombre, monotonous reflections. What kind of story the 1953 Dominica Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure tell is the object of this review. The reader will interpret the commentary and classify the story for himself.

The budget introduces itself with a financial summary which shows anticipated revenue from three sources of $2,687,819, plus a cash balance in hand at the beginning of the year of $46,717—making a total estimated revenue for 1953 of $2,734,536. Expenditure under four main classifications is estimated at $2,728,568—thus leaving an estimated surplus of $5,968 to begin A.D. 1954.

A break-down of a few of these figures may be of some interest. The estimated amount of the revenue to be derived locally is placed at $1,495.675. Of this sum approximately $1,065,826 (or 71% of the total) is to be raised on indirect taxation. On the basis of a population of 50,000, this means a per capita indirect taxation of $21.32 in 1953. When, however, the per capita tax payment is calculated on the whole local revenue of $1,495.675 the burden of taxation is reduced to only $29.91 per head of population in the year—about $2.49 per month ; 8·9 cents a day.

Imperial Government with a Grant-in-Aid of $374,400 may be said to finance every taxpayer in the Colony (and this includes every living soul) to the tune of $7.49 in 1953.

Colonial Development and Welfare next comes in with an expenditure of approximately $16.35 per head of population.

What We Pay For

We pay for Service as well as Goods of which the following are fair samples, viz ;—

(a) the salaries of some 870 Government Officials for the services they give to the public ; the Saving Bank for safe custody of our money ; the Police for ensuring that Weights and Measures in use are correct, etc.

(b) the value of plants propagated by the Agriculture Department whilst we were attending to our quicker profit-making businesses ; Fee Stamps to give legal validity to our instruments testifying our right of possession to real and personal properties ; Prison Farms Produce, Workshop articles, etc.

For local officials salaries, we pay $895,561 from local and Imperial Government funds plus a further $5,708 for Governor and Staff of Governor's Office in Grenada. This does not include salaries paid on C.D.C projects which amounts to $126,590. The percentages of salaries to revenue are therefore as follows :—Local Revenue to be collected, plus Grant-in-Aid, $2,687,819—Salaries and other Personal Emoluments $901,269 or 33½%. Broken down further, it means that every inhabitant in the island contributes 83 cents a month through taxation, direct and indirect, to pay Government officials. C.D.&W. pay 14·9% of its funds to direct salaries, transport and subsistance allowances and similar indirect personal subsidies.

"OTHER CHARGES" which, like *Charity*, can cover a "multitude of sins" swallow $816.793 of the balance of $1,786,550 revenue left. This sum is to be spent on a number of things during the year—some of which are indispensable to the maintenance and even improvement of the Service, as for example, Rent of Police Stations ; Food for Nurses and Orderlies etc. Some others may be just *very* desirable but not *absolutely* essential office paraphernalia, as Electric Fans for a "Garden Office", Adding Machines and Duplicators and the continual refurnishing and reequipping of very nearly every public office inescapably suggest.

The balance remaining is divided between Special and Extraordinary expenditures in the proportions of $25,532 to the former and $177,230 to the latter. To these pages of the "Story in Figures" must attention be therefore turned and search made for light on the prospects in view for the Island for the year just commenced.

The Finding.

Heads of Expenditure 4, Agriculture; 18, Police and 26 Public Works Department, supply the information being sought for. Under the first named (Agriculture) are three new items of Special Expenditure amounting to $3,500. These are an Agricultural Exhibition to cost $1,500; a Rat Control Campaign set down at $1,000 and Soil Conservation Work estimated to cost $1,000. This last item is calculated, if carried out, to give incentives to land workers to conserve the soil. No expenditure on it, however, or on the Rat Campaign will be undertaken without prior authority.

New Saddles, Re-instatement of Rifle Range and Standard Weights and Measures involve taxpayers in an expenditure of $2,750 on one Police Special Vote and a miscellany of Equipment and Siren Calls will cost $1,440 on another Special Expenditure.

Public Works (Extraordinary), however, to cost in the year $98,195 visionizes a different prospective to expenditures rifle shooting practices or even rat campaigning in a thickly wooded island and siren calling. Of course "Wharf Rats" campaigning would be a most justifiable and profitable expenditure.

(The story hidden in the $98,195 P. W. D. (Extraordinary) vote will be probed later.)

(To be continued.)

News in Brief

MRS. R. J. MANNING arrived on Monday by the "Goose" to rejoin her husband the Honourable Mr. Justice Manning in resident at Morne Cottage.

We take this opportunity to extend to her a very hearty Welcome.

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IF it is true that some good American dollars find their way to Dominica, it can not be denied on the other hand that heaps of rubbish, in the shape of books comics, papers and other tomfooleries are dumped on this island. Some of the rubbish is printed in New York, but the bulk comes from the gutter press of Chicago. In order that this note may not serve as an advertisement, no names or titles will be given.

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THE only warning is: Beware! Parents, beware for the love of your children! Children, beware of the poison that is in the stuff, and that may slowly infiltrate into your soul and cause your spiritual ruin. The catalogues advertising the rubbish is nothing short of a blasphemous invitation to witchcraft and superstitious practices, and consequently ought to be banned from the mails.