INVESTMENT FOR PUBLIC WELFARE

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Every person makes some sort of financial investment for the benefit of the public. Through taxation he contributes, willy-nilly, to those public services operated by the government. If his income exceeds his necessary expenditures, he frequently makes voluntary gifts. In either case, it is a matter of natural concern to him that his investment be efficiently administered for purposes of unquestioned social value. If his investment is by voluntary gift, as to a charitable institution, he naturally selects the objects of his altruism with care; if it is through the taxation route, he is too often insufﬁciently alert to the type of judgment and management exercised by his elected agents, the government.

1 Address at the annual dinner of the Technology Club of New York at the Waldorf-Astoria, New York, on the evening of May 6.

As contrasts of stewardship and wisdom in handling our money for the public welfare I choose two examples of approximately equal size, the Passamaquoddy Power Project and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The former illustrates a type of government expenditure uneconomically and politically conceived; the latter typifies the better class of educational institution or altruistic foundation. If you prefer illustrations on a still larger ﬁnancial scale, take the Florida Ship Canal and Harvard University, or the complete Grand Coulee Dam and the Rockefeller Foundation.

The Passamaquoddy Power Project, if carried through, will realize man’s long-cherished dream of harnessing the tides in a large way. Perhaps its appeal to the imagination accounts for the fact that the government has appropriated $7,000,000 and has