

1892.

NEW ZEALAND.

MINES STATEMENT,

BY THE HON. R. J. SEDDON, MINISTER OF MINES.

MR. SPEAKER,—

In making my second Statement on the mining industry, it is gratifying to be able to show that the production of gold has greatly exceeded the quantity obtained for several years previously, and also that the output from the coal-mines is steadily increasing year after year. The magnitude the mining industry is assuming, and the large population it is the means of supporting, cannot fail to bring it prominently before all classes of the community as a very important element in contributing to the wealth and prosperity of the colony. It affords profitable employment to a large percentage of our population, and has been the means of bringing into the country a class of highly deserving colonists who, by their determination, energy, and perseverance have explored the hitherto unknown mineral lands the colony contains, opened up extensive tracts of land for permanent settlement, have been the means of bringing the waste lands of the Crown into a state of cultivation, filling them with smiling homesteads and populous towns, causing other industries to spring into existence, besides being a class which contributes largely to the revenue. When we look back, Sir, to thirty years ago and compare the colony in its present state to what it was then, the changes it has undergone are something marvellous. The attraction of our goldfields has been the means of causing thousands of people to pour in from all parts of the world to search for the mineral wealth the colony contains. These have had to undergo many hardships, endure privations, and overcome many obstacles; but notwithstanding all these the miner of to-day has not lost that liberal, free, and independent spirit which has characterised him from the earliest period of the gold discovery. They are a class of colonists we are greatly indebted to, and it behoves us to give them every encouragement and assistance in further developing and opening up the immense treasures which are distributed in rich profusion throughout the length and breadth of the land, but hidden from the eyes of man in the bowels of the earth. By so doing we are encouraging an industry which is yearly increasing in magnitude, giving profitable employment to the labouring-classes, and thereby increasing our wealth and future prosperity.

MINERAL PRODUCTION.

The principal attention of the mining community has hitherto been chiefly directed to the development of the gold, silver, and coal deposits, and, although a certain quantity of other mineral products have been yearly obtained, the number of men engaged in other mines is comparatively small in proportion to those employed in working auriferous and argentiferous lodes, auriferous drifts, and coal, but we may look in the future for more attention being given to the development of other minerals. We cannot expect this to be done rapidly, inasmuch that in commencing any new industry there are many difficulties and obstacles to be overcome, not only in opening-up and developing the mines, but also in finding a suitable market for the disposal of the products; and as nearly all the metalliferous and mineral deposits are found in the high lands and mountainous regions not opened up by roads, the question of getting proper machinery and supplies on to the ground, and cost of transit of ore to a port of shipment becomes a serious consideration, as it requires a large amount of capital to be expended before any return can be expected. An instance of this can be given in the case of the Wakatipu Scheelite Company, who some years ago opened out a scheelite mine at the Buckleburn, at the head of Lake Wakatipu, in Otago. On commencing to work their mine they had a good