

1942.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT

(BY THE HON. H. T. ARMSTRONG, MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS).

MR. SPEAKER,—

In accordance with the provisions of section 8 of the Public Works Act, 1928, I submit my report on works carried out during the year ended 31st March, 1942, together with a statement of expenditure certified by the Controller and Auditor-General.

Owing to war conditions, public-works activities have been further curtailed, and for this reason, combined with the circumstances which now obtain, this report covers only a brief survey of the works undertaken.

In my last Statement I mentioned that my Department had been engaged to a large extent upon works directly associated with national defence. During the past year normal public works have been still further reduced, and the departmental organization has been devoted, on a much larger scale, to urgent and necessary defence construction.

Just before the end of the financial year the Government set up a Defence Construction Council and appointed a Commissioner of Defence Construction. The Commissioner was given wide powers in regard to the control of men and materials, and was given the responsibility of fixing priorities for the huge programme of defence construction. He set up an organization, which made use of existing Departments as far as possible. My Department, as the principal constructing Department, has been used by the Commissioner to the fullest extent, and by its use works of unprecedented magnitude have been carried out in record time.

I had hoped that upon the passing of the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act it would have been possible to establish the governing Council almost immediately for the purpose of making preliminary arrangements to inaugurate a practicable policy with the least delay. However, it was not found possible until recently to constitute the Council, but the necessary appointments have been made, and the Council will commence to function in the near future. It is expected that a considerable amount of investigatory work will be involved before the Council will be in a position to set up Catchment Boards to control any particular catchment areas.

Owing to the pressure of other more important work, the Department has not been able to undertake any surveys in connection with rehabilitation proposals, but as soon as staff can be made available a commencement will be made.

Fortunately there have been no disastrous floods of the first magnitude, but a number of floods occurred in various parts of the country, and considerable damage was done in some areas.

I desire to record the Government's appreciation of the services of Mr. J. T. Mair, who retired from the position of Government Architect, in which capacity he rendered notable professional service for nineteen years.

I wish also to acknowledge again the splendid work of the officers and workmen of the Department, who have given excellent service during a period of extraordinary activity and under difficult circumstances.

At the end of the year, 852 officers of the Department were serving with the forces, and it is my deep regret that 19 have made the supreme sacrifice and 30 have suffered casualties or are prisoners of war.

FINANCE.

The payments and receipts in connection with the Public Works Fund and other associated votes and accounts for the year 1941-42 are shown in the tabulation following.

The gross expenditure amounted to £18,236,324, of which £3,072,264 was expended by other Government Departments; the recoveries in reduction of expenditure amounted to £7,636,758, of which £1,424,456 was recovered by other Departments; the net expenditure totalled £10,599,566, of which £1,674,418 was expended by other Departments.