

1946
NEW ZEALAND

STATE HYDRO-ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT

STATEMENT BY THE HON. R. SEMPLE, MINISTER IN CHARGE OF THE STATE HYDRO-ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT

MR. SPEAKER,—

As I indicated in my Public Works Statement of 1945, steps were taken during the year to establish the former Hydro-electric Branch of the Public Works Department as a separate Department of State. The Electricity Act, 1945, passed towards the end of the last session of Parliament, made provision for this, and the State Hydro-electric Department was duly established.

As Minister in Charge, I have the honour of presenting its first annual report.

FUNCTIONS OF DEPARTMENT

The new Department is charged with the administration and control of the State Supply of Electrical Energy Act, 1917; the Electric Power-Boards Act, 1925; the Electrical Wiremen's Registration Act, 1925; the sections of the Public Works Act dealing with water-power and erection of electric lines; and sections of such other Acts as deal with the supply and use of electricity. It will continue to operate and manage the whole of the various hydro-electric undertakings previously completed; it will carry on surveys and investigations of future extensions, so as to be in a position to make recommendations as to future requirements; it will design the various works required for new developments, and will construct and erect such sections of them as transmission-lines, substations, power-house-plant machinery, as was previously carried out by the Hydro-electric Branch. Major civil engineering works, such as dams, tunnels, roading, housing, &c., for which the Public Works Department now has the organization, will continue to be constructed by that Department, in collaboration with the new Department, and to its designs and requirements.

FUTURE SCOPE

The State already has invested in its various electrical undertakings a sum of over £29,000,000, and obtains an annual revenue of over £2,750,000. Statistics indicate that over a period of years the demand for electricity expands at an average rate of at least 10 per cent. per annum. This means, therefore, that the capacity of the present generating plants, which are now seriously overloaded, will have to be doubled within the next seven or eight years, and that we will have to expend as much capital in the next seven years on electrical development as has been expended since the Government commenced its first works at Lake Coleridge in 1911. The State hydro-electric developments have been so successful in the past that they have been able to meet all charges for operation, interest, depreciation, and loan redemption without calling upon the Consolidated Fund, or any fund outside the Electric Supply Account, for assistance.

With the same prudent administration, I feel confident that, even with the rapid increase in capital indicated above, our electric-supply business will continue to be one of the most successful State undertakings.