

1947
NEW ZEALAND

MINISTRY OF WORKS STATEMENT

(BY THE HON. R. SEMPLE, MINISTER OF WORKS)

MR. SPEAKER, —

I submit my report for the year ended the 31st March, 1947, together with a statement of expenditure certified by the Controller and Auditor-General as provided for under section 8 of the Public Works Act, 1928.

The year under review, which might be termed the first full post-war year of public-works activity, has been attended with rehabilitation difficulties as well as difficulties connected with the settling-down of the reorganized administration during a period of shortages in man-power and materials. Without exception similar difficulties are being experienced in all countries during these immediate post-war years.

The whole building and construction industry has been extremely sensitive to this condition as it faced the bank of deferred demands occasioned by the war years, as well as the need for new works necessary for the country's further economic development.

During the current year the functions and activities of the Ministry of Works, particularly in relation to the Public Works Department, have been more adequately defined based upon the experience gained during the preceding year.

The investigations which the Commissioner of Works has made during the past year have shown that the accumulated demands, and the potential demands, upon the construction industry are now greater than they have been at any previous time in the Dominion's history, and the rate at which all sections of this demand is being satisfied is substantially lower than the rate at which demands continue to accumulate. The Government accordingly has found it necessary to prepare a works programme of State and State-subsidized works for the current year on realistic lines related to available finance, man-power, and materials, and to ensure orderly progress of approved developmental works. This programme for 1947-48 is the first prepared following my announcement of the regional schedules of works, and may be regarded as the first step in the practical initiation of the Government's policy in respect to national and regional development. This programme will be followed each successive year with further programmes designed to secure the completion of works which are most advantageous to the whole economy of the Dominion.

The labour force at present available to the construction industry is considerably less than pre-war strength. In 1939, 47,000 men were employed in the industry, whereas indications are that only approximately 36,000 are available to-day. The number of workmen engaged on State and State-subsidized works on 31st March last was approximately 18,500, or 10,000 less than the number employed on similar works at the outbreak