

1948
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, 1948, together with a statement of expenditure (Appendix A) certified by the Controller and Auditor-General as provided for under section 8 of the Public Works Act, 1928.

Post-war difficulties as they affect the building and construction industry have continued during the year under review and naturally have had an adverse effect on the desired progress on some of the most important projects. As a result of the manner in which essential industries in almost every corner of the world were geared up to the highest degree of efficiency and greatest possible production during the war, it may have been anticipated by many that when the time came to change over from war production to the normal peacetime requirements of the immediate post-war years, much benefit would be derived from the production potential of those war years. Unfortunately, the benefits which may have been expected from the record high-level capacity of many industries have been lost in the phenomenal demands from all parts of the world, particularly by the belligerent nations, in their efforts to overtake the accumulated arrears of developmental works.

New Zealand, in common with other countries, is experiencing these problems. Not only does this state of affairs affect post-war development for the Government, but also for local bodies and private enterprise. All are confronted with unprecedented arrears for which demands are now being made on the building and construction industry. Many of these demands are for works which are truly vital; the great bulk of them for works which are highly essential in the interests of the future prosperity and standard of living of this Dominion.

The excess of demand over the present potential of the works industry has necessitated the continuance of the Building Control Emergency Regulations beyond the special needs of war for which they were originally designed. During the year, the implementation of these regulations has apparently given cause for criticism from some quarters, but, having regard to the necessity in the national interests of ensuring that certain classes of constructional work should be pursued in preference to others considered of lower priority, or, in other words, of lesser importance to our national economy, I am satisfied beyond doubt that the measures of control exercised by the Government in this direction have been warranted. To have pursued an unrestricted programme of work, both State and private, would have without question resulted in those with the most spending-power achieving the greatest amount of work, regardless