1948

NEW ZEALAND

STATE HYDRO-ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT

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

MR. SPEAKER,—

In my last statement an account was given of the difficulties in the field of electric supply in the post-war years. During the year under review the same conditions were in evidence, but nevertheless, and in spite of the adverse factors, work was advanced to such an extent that the power position was materially improved in both Islands.

In the North Island the completion of two of the three 30,000 kW. units at Karapiro and the near completion of the Upper Waikaremoana Station at Kaitawa were chiefly responsible for the improvement.

In the South Island the provision of an amount of temporary storage at Pukaki gave a measure of relief to the main system, while the temporary storage at Cobb made a great difference to the supply in the Nelson-Marlborough districts.

However, once again a dry period came in the North Island, extending over a period of five months, first at Waikaremoana and later at Taupo.

Normal rainfall recommenced in March, 1948, at Waikaremoana, and in April, 1948, at Taupo, after which there was the usual period of delayed run-off before the storage in the lakes began to improve.

The shortage of water was aggravated by shortage of both coal and oil for the steam-stations at Auckland and Wellington during the early part of 1948.

The shortage of oil fuel is world wide, and there is no reliable information as to the possible duration, or ultimate extent, of the shortage. The event, however, does serve to emphasize the importance of keeping our country's vital power supply independent of imported fuels to the greatest possible extent. The fact that sufficient oil fuel is not available for even the relatively small amount of steam-generating plant now in the country is very disturbing, as it practically rules out any large-scale use of this fuel in New Zealand for future power generation.

Coal-supplies, for one reason or another, have not been equal to requirements, and attention is drawn to the fact that this condition is not peculiar to New Zealand. Any criticism in this regard would only be of use, if, at the same time, a remedy were suggested.

The fact remains that a regular quantity of coal is not available, and this must arouse grave doubts as to the advisability of the use of coal-burning plants where a better alternative is more readily available.

Other countries without water-power resources look with envy upon the immense water-power potential of New Zealand which only awaits development in order to place this country beyond the possibility of power-shortages for a considerable time to come.