

1949
NEW ZEALAND

STATE HYDRO-ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT

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

MR. SPEAKER,—

My last statement surveyed the post-war position of electric-power supply in New Zealand and traversed the reasons governing the policy of the Government in this regard.

During the year under review the whole subject has been fully and freely discussed, particularly during the annual Conference of the Electric-power Boards and Supply Authorities' Association. This interchange of information has lead to a better understanding of the nature of the problems confronting the whole electric-supply industry. It is pleasing to record that the Supply Authorities generally endorsed the policy of proceeding with the construction of the major hydro-electric projects with the utmost speed.

The understanding and continued support of all sections of the community is very necessary during the time which must elapse until the supply of electric power can be considered secure from the vagaries of the weather and the vicissitudes of operating plant at high load levels.

The addition of further generating plant at Kaitawa and Waitaki, combined with improved hydraulic conditions, resulted in a much better standard of service, while the revised Electricity Control Order transferred the maximum of discretionary power to the local authorities.

My thanks are due to the Power Supply Authorities and to their consumers for the great measure of co-operation they are giving in complying with the directions issued from time to time. It will be realized that any directions given for the purpose of electricity control are designed to protect the community from the possibility of emergency power cuts, and it is the desire of the Government that the power available shall be distributed equitably at all times. As, without doubt, new consumers are entitled to share the available supply, all consumers are called upon to exercise restraint in the usage of power so that, by avoiding waste, the benefits of this great amenity may be enjoyed by all.

The progress of the various hydro-electric works is reviewed subsequently in this statement, but it is opportune to state once again that the power-supply position in the North and South Islands will depend upon the date of operation of the Maraetai, Roxburgh, and Cobb projects, and the return to satisfactory conditions hinges upon their speedy completion.

Major factors affecting the rate of building are man-power and the supply of construction materials. Efforts are being made to augment the number of skilled artisans and construction workers, while the steel position shows general improvement, except in the case of Australian steel. The temporary shortage of cement is causing some difficulties at present, but I am confident that this can be overcome, so that the works may proceed without interruption from this cause.

The question of letting overseas construction contracts is also under active consideration, but this problem is complicated by the present international conditions, and, in the meantime, the works are being pushed ahead so that, in any event, no time may be lost.