

1914.

NEW ZEALAND

WHANGAMARINO SWAMP, AUCKLAND
PROVINCIAL DISTRICT

(STATEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROPOSED DRAINAGE OF THE).

*Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.*STATEMENT *re* PROPOSED DRAINAGE OF WHANGAMARINO SWAMP.

THE area of swamp land is approximately 11,300 acres. The proposal to drain this swamp was reported upon by Mr. William C. Breakell, C.E., under date 2nd March, 1909, who stated, "I am of opinion that it is impracticable to drain or otherwise reclaim the Whangamarino and other Government lands adjoining without commencing at the initial point—the clearing of the bed of the Waikato River."

The Whangamarino and Maramarua Rivers control the position, and when the summer level of the Waikato River at Mercer rises 2 ft. then these two rivers overflow their banks and the swamp lands are awash for a very considerable area. There is less than 1 ft. of fall in the Whangamarino River from its junction with the Waikato River to the foothills, and the fall of the Maramarua River is also very small. Accordingly, with a rise in the Waikato River there is a corresponding rise in the Maramarua and Whangamarino Rivers, and a substantial lowering of the Waikato River is necessary to ensure gravity drainage of the swamp lands. It would be possible to drain the swamp lands by banking the Maramarua and Whangamarino Rivers, and erecting banks along railway-line, and thereafter relying upon pumping to keep the area free of water, but such a scheme would be very costly. It is also manifest that to lower the Waikato River will also be a huge work, as the fall therein is small. It will probably be not so difficult to reclaim swamp areas close to foothills. An engineering survey is now in hand in connection with the swamp under review, but, as this survey is being done together with the Waikato River survey, it will necessarily be some months ere it is complete, especially as the officer in local charge of same has lately been under an operation for appendicitis. The swamp survey will disclose to what extent both Crown lands and freehold lands can be adequately drained.

Necessarily any scheme for drainage of this swamp must be on a mutual basis, and the owners of freehold lands will be required to pay proportionately to the benefits received from such drainage. It would be useless at the present time to subsidize any local body formed for the purpose of prosecuting drainage operations, seeing that so many factors enter into the consideration of such a scheme. A plan will in due course be drawn up showing all the owners of lands who will be affected, so that a fair allocation of cost against such lands may be arrived at. The Crown is anxious to make its own lands available for settlement, as it has done in the case of Hauraki Plains, but cannot be expected to undertake any scheme likely to benefit privately owned lands without such lands finding a proportion of the cost.

The Waikato River presents the most serious obstacle to drainage operations on Whangamarino Swamp, and most exhaustive engineering data is now being obtained thereof.

An Inland Waterways Royal Commission has been set up quite lately, and the Commission will, towards the end of the year, commence its deliberations. Included in its order of reference is the improvement of the Waikato River, and also the drainage of Whangamarino Swamp, so that it must be very apparent that the Government is very sincere in its desire to enable the settlement of its swamp lands. To enable the Royal Commission to fully consider the matter the various engineering surveys were put in hand some eighteen months ago, and are still being carried on under supervision of the Land Drainage Engineer.