

1925.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT

BY THE HON. J. G. COATES, MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS.

MR. SPEAKER,—

This is the sixth occasion upon which it has been my privilege to present to you the annual Statement of the Public Works Department.

In last year's Statement the tendency of some workers to look upon loan-moneys as a means of providing them with an opportunity of earning their living was stressed and condemned. The number of works of pressing need during the year has been so great that, instead of a reduction, there has been an increase—of nearly a thousand—in the number of men employed on public works. This position need create no anxiety, as the works undertaken are of public utility and directly or indirectly remunerative. With the exception of the year 1922, when costs were higher, last year's expenditure proved a record. It is gratifying to be able to add that the amount of work done was relatively greater. This last is due to the excellent work of the Department's Engineers and other officers, and to the industry and loyal co-operation of all other employees, and I take this opportunity of expressing to all concerned my sincere thanks and appreciation.

While it is inevitable that public works of a varied and extensive nature should be carried on in developing a young country, if these are not to prove wasteful and unremunerative it is essential that the sources of wealth-production should be expanded concurrently. One of the most difficult tasks of the Minister of Public Works is to balance and utilize money and labour available so that progress may not be hindered, while production is increased sufficiently to allay all anxiety as to the source from which the interest on moneys expended will accrue.

The pronouncements made in London recently concerning the necessity of rationing loan-moneys compel us to consider very carefully our programme of proposed public works, so that any curtailment of our activities contingent upon the difficulty of borrowing may be effected without serious dislocation of the labour-market and with the minimum of inconvenience to the workers.