

1928.

NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT

(BY THE HON. K. S. WILLIAMS, MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS).

MR. SPEAKER,—

This is the third occasion it has been my privilege to present to you the annual Statement of the Public Works Department, and I think I can now claim to have fairly attained the intimate knowledge that the many ramifications of this Department necessitate in order that I, as Minister, may keep my finger on the many activities which my Department carries out.

The preceding year has been one of much activity in the various public works conducted by my Department, and I again wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the members of my staff for the willing and efficient service they have rendered. Railway-construction and hydro-electric development especially have been on a large scale, and much good work has been accomplished. During the year I continued extending my knowledge of the various works in hand by making personal investigations of the progress being made in as many cases as I was able.

The public works now being undertaken must prove to be of much benefit in the development of the country's natural resources. The extending of hydro-electric services to our primary producers, especially in the dairying districts, and the access to markets given to outlying districts by railway and road construction, all tend to increase the Dominion's export trade. The prospects of the coming season are bright, the markets being steady for our chief exports, and it is hoped that the service given by the Government, both in transport and power, will be availed of to the utmost by the primary producers.

During the year the most noteworthy progress has been evidenced by the completion and handing over to the Working Railways Department of 118 miles 29 chains of railway. It is true that for some years past a considerable portion of this mileage has been almost completed, and the public have had a modified use of the same. Progress of works further on has been so interlocked with the completed portion, involving the running of construction trains continuously over the completed portion, that it was not deemed advisable to hand over some, which might have been handed over, until my Department was in a position to transfer to the control of the Railways Department a considerable length, and could do so without prejudicing the progress of other works. This more particularly refers to the East Coast Main Trunk Railway in the Bay of Plenty district, where until a through connection was made to Auckland it would not have been possible for the full value of the work to be obtained. Now that the connection between Tauranga and Waihi has been completed and that a halt has been called in extension eastward, it has been possible to open the railway from Taneatua on the eastward, right through to Auckland.

The extension of the rail-head to the northern side of the Northern Wairoa River at Kirikopuni marks another step forward in the removal of the isolation of the far North, and has been instrumental in developing and bringing a large fertile part of the Dominion into close touch with its principal markets and centres of social intercourse. There is an opinion in the minds of many people—I might almost say a great many people—that railways are no longer required, and that further