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NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH

(REPORT OF).

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER IN CHARGE (RIGHT HON. J. G. COATES).

Laid on the Table by Leave of the House.

INDUSTRIAL AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.

DURING the past decade three main considerations have resulted in a general feeling that New Zealand must be in the forefront in the application of science to its industries—firstly, the prominent examples of the proven advantages of scientific research to newer industries; secondly, the enormous post-war developments in almost all countries in organized research on national lines; and, thirdly, the potentialities of considerable improvements in the more old-established industries through fuller utilization of scientific practices.

In particular, it was recognized that science, through research, had opened up many new opportunities to agriculture. Two of the main industries of the Dominion—meat and dairy—provided singular examples which made this recognition inevitable. It was felt and realized that while science had proved its value in the field of production generally, yet at the same time this value had not been fully exploited. Consequently, the need for the expansion of research activity was felt in order that our primary industries might be provided with constantly improving and thoroughly sound bases upon which to build their future economic security.

Moreover, because of the unavoidable hazards involved in the farming business, and the vital relationship of agriculture to the whole business of the Dominion, the public interest justified special Governmental effort in this direction. Since the farming industry is comprised of small productive units, and the same being true of the manufacturing industries of the Dominion also, it is well-nigh impossible for individual farmers or manufacturers to keep abreast of the scientific methods adopted by overseas organizations. In such circumstances the need for the Government giving a lead and fostering co-operative scientific effort was but a natural far-sighted endeavour in the national interest.

Again, it is of fundamental importance in considering legislation connected with agriculture or industry that it should not be enacted as emergencies arise or have arisen, but should be adopted in advance of such, with a view to removing causes and enabling them to be met as they occur.

Consequently, two years ago, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research was constituted, and an executive Department established by legislation for the purpose of co-ordinating research work in the Dominion and promoting research and investigation in all industries, both primary and secondary.

The method of administration and operation of the Department aimed at being as simple as possible, free from political bias and political pressure, while the policy I laid down as Minister was to take the public and industries fully into our confidence and carry out work in co-operation with them. It was realized that, as results in research depend largely on sustained effort, full benefit from this policy of national research could be expected only after a few years of operation, and for a sustained effort in the right direction industry must take a responsible part.

The attention of the Research Council was first directed to arranging practical co-operation and effort through all possible existing institutions capable of conducting research. The results have been decidedly promising, institutions and workers, which hitherto had preserved a certain degree of isolation and aloofness, having come together in an earnest spirit of co-operation.

During the two years now almost elapsed since the passing of legislation, definite arrangements have been made for the conduct of some dozen major projects of research connected with Dominion industries, while the organization of others, particularly those relating to the secondary industries,