

1936.

NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS (HON. R. SEMPLE).

Laid on the Table of both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave.

MR. SPEAKER,—

A more vigorous public-works programme is one of the main planks of the Government's policy. My investigations have indicated that in the past there has been no particularly well-defined public-works policy. It is only fair to the Department that its officers should know the Government's mind, and further it is only right that a policy involving the country in millions of pounds of expenditure should be along sound, well-defined, and definite lines. My effort has been to lay down such a policy. Since I assumed office as Minister of Public Works I have given much consideration to those works which, while being capable of absorbing large numbers of men, will give the greatest and readiest return to the State, and I have endeavoured by personal inspections to familiarize myself with proposed works of this nature.

CONDITIONS ON PUBLIC WORKS.

On assuming office I found conditions in the Public Works Department to be not altogether satisfactory, although I do not blame the departmental officers for this. As a result of the relief-work system adopted by the late Government during the last few years the men employed by the Department had not been given any inducement to work properly. Stoppages of work were occurring in many places, and discontent existed on a great number of works. I found the Department to be practically depleted of effective and up-to-date plant. The institution of the relief-work system had brought about a method of doing work by means of inadequate plant, and the importance of a job seemed to be considered chiefly by its possibility of absorbing manual labour. In fact, since the stoppage of the railway-works some years ago the Department had been steadily disposing of its plant and machinery. The result to-day is that, before an energetic programme of public works can be initiated, many thousands of pounds will have to be spent in the purchase of new and up-to-date machinery. We are at present making a careful selection of the most modern and up-to-date machinery for construction work of all kinds so that the work will be done as speedily and efficiently as possible. I am determined to scrap such inadequate appliances as the wheel-barrow, hand-cart, &c. In other words, we are going to modernize the public works of this country. Certain tractors, locomotives, compressors, and graders of the latest type are already on order, and others will follow.

1—D. 1A.