

SESS. II.—1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

MINES STATEMENT,

BY THE HON. R. J. SEDDON, MINISTER OF MINES.

MR. SPEAKER,—

In making my first Statement showing the results and growth of the mining industry, and the beneficial effect it produces on the colony, it is necessary for me to refer to its progress in the past, and to its future development, in order to show its tendency to promote the settlement of a permanent population following agricultural, industrial, and other pursuits. The discovery of gold in any country is the means of attracting people to its shores, and this alone has brought thousands of persons into New Zealand who otherwise would not have come, and although many of them have long ceased to be connected with mining, they have followed other pursuits, and made this country the land of their adoption.

It may be interesting to honourable members for me to state that about one-eighth the entire European population at the present time is supported by the mining industry, and hence it must be recognised as an important factor in contributing to the revenue of the colony. In 1857, when gold was first discovered in the Collingwood district, the European population was only about 57,000, and, notwithstanding the large exodus that has taken place during the last five years, we have now a population of 626,830. Moreover, we find that during the first twenty-nine years of our goldfields, from 1857 to 1886, the average annual increase of the population was 16,154, but during the last five years it has only averaged 9,500. No better proof can be given that mining tends to settle a permanent population than by calling attention to the settlement on the west coast of the Middle Island, comprising the Counties of Buller, Inangahua, Grey, and Westland, which have now a population of 31,450; and had it not been for the discovery of gold and coal in these counties, this portion of the colony would still have been in its native state and looked on as a wilderness. Therefore, in regard to settlement, the colony is indebted to a large extent to the hardy and intrepid miner, who has forced his way through the wilds where, in many instances, no human being had ever before trod, overcoming all obstacles, difficulties, and dangers that beset his path, until he unfolded the riches that for thousands of ages had been hidden in the bowels of the earth, thereby causing attention to be directed to this country as a land abounding in mineral wealth, also containing large areas of rich agricultural land, and possessing a climate that cannot be surpassed in any part of the world. Having all these advantages combined and brought prominently before the eyes of the world, the result has been the rapid growth of other pursuits and industries, thus making mining form a high incentive to the settlement of the people on the lands.

MINERAL PRODUCTION.

In the early days of the goldfields attention was mostly given to goldmining, but since then coal and other mineral products are eagerly looked after. There is no one who follows any profession or calling that requires more technical knowledge and training than the miner, in order to enable him to follow his avocation to the greatest advantage. He must have a knowledge of all the mineral ores, and be capable of ascertaining the percentage of metal those ores contain, as well as a practical knowledge of the methods of working lodes and auriferous