

1910.
NEW ZEALAND.

MINES STATEMENT,

BY THE HON. RODERICK MCKENZIE, MINISTER OF MINES.

Mr. SPEAKER,—

Sir,—In presenting to the House my second annual Statement on the mining industry of the Dominion, I desire to congratulate honourable members and the people generally on the satisfactory progress and continued advancement of this important industry in almost all its branches.

In reviewing our mining industry in my last Statement I took occasion to remind honourable members of its beneficial influence on the progress and prosperity of our people in the past, and it is now most gratifying to have to announce that, while this country, in common with other parts of the world, suffered some slight industrial depression, this branch of our industries was seldom in a more vigorous or prosperous condition than during the period under consideration; and, moreover, the increased energy in the development of our mineral resources has assisted materially in preventing congestion in our labour-market.

In concluding my observations on our mining industry last year I informed honourable members that the indications for the following year were exceedingly promising, and it is now most satisfactory to state that my expectations have been fully realized, the value of our mineral products during the year having exceeded that of the previous year by £255,456.

It will doubtless interest honourable members, sir, if I call their attention to the steady progress and satisfactory development of the mining industry under the fostering care and reasonable assistance given to it during recent years. During the last forty years there have been two distinct periods in the history of this most important industry: the first of these periods was the twenty years from 1870—when the industry may be said to have been at the zenith of its prosperity, and of its early development, when it produced £2,345,667—until 1890, when, through continued neglect and administrative indifference, the industry was nearly crushed out of existence, with the result that during the concluding year of this period of gradual decline the produce of our mines was reduced to £1,240,903, being a decrease in production between the first and last years of this deplorable period of £1,104,764, or nearly one-half.

From 1890, when this industry was at its lowest depth of depression, and produced only £1,240,903, until now, the industry has, under the protection of equitable legislation and generous assistance in developing mineral resources, passed through a period of general progress and annually increasing prosperity, with the result that last year our mineral productions amounted to £3,791,133, being an increase of £2,550,230 between the last year of the twenty-year period of neglect, decline, and depression, and the last year of the twenty-year period of fostering care, progress, and prosperity of our mining industry. I trust,