

1915.  
NEW ZEALAND.

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# PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT,

BY THE HON. WILLIAM FRASER, MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS.

MR. SPEAKER,—

When I delivered the Public Works Statement last year the general impression was that the war would not last much more than one year. At present who will venture to predict when the war will terminate? It is a somewhat extraordinary fact that, notwithstanding the thousands of workers who have joined the Expeditionary Forces, some 5,000 men still require to be engaged on public works to prevent the cry of unemployment being heard. This in some measure is explainable during the winter months, but not so during summer and autumn, when shearing, harvesting, and the other operations incidental to the primary industries will require a considerable amount of labour. These primary industries must be considered, or the country as a whole will suffer. That this labour may have to be provided for by slackening off work on railways, roads, and bridges during summer and autumn is very probable. There is no intention to exploit labour on behalf of those carrying on such industries, but employment on public works cannot be found for those to whom work at fair rates is offered elsewhere. It is generally recognized that it will not be wise during the continuance of the war to expend more borrowed money than is absolutely necessary.

The expenditure during the financial year ended 31st March, 1914—£2,949,992—constituted a record, but the similar expenditure for 1914-15 was actually larger—viz., £2,953,368—made up of £2,835,692 under the Public Works Fund and allied special accounts, and £117,676 under the Consolidated Fund.

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