

1939.

NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT

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

MR. SPEAKER,—

Before proceeding to review, in particular, works carried out during the past year it seems desirable, in view of the widespread interest shown by a large section of the people in public works, to make a few general observations. Honourable members are aware that throughout the whole history of this Dominion public works have always been a very important factor in the process of its development and general advancement. Whatever has been achieved up to the present has been made possible to a great degree by works which have created opportunities for land settlement and production and have also provided utility services in various directions.

I recognize that the responsibility of administering public-works activities calls for the careful consideration of all kinds of schemes and projects that will promote the interests of the Dominion. The policy which has been, and is being, pursued under my administration is framed to advance the well-being of all sections of the community.

I have found that there is a popular belief that public works relate mostly to the construction of railways, roads, and bridges. While it is true that a large proportion of public-works expenditure is and should be devoted to such works, there are many other important undertakings which form part of the Government's public-works programme. I refer to such activities as the erection of public buildings for State administrative purposes, departmental buildings, post-offices, police-stations, courthouses, education and health institutions; the construction of national hydro-electric schemes, irrigation schemes, lighthouses, harbour-works, and aerodromes; land-drainage, reclamation, and river-control. In addition to works under these headings, there is the constant maintenance of the various buildings and structures, and the operation of hydro-electric power and irrigation schemes.

Of the works mentioned the buildings are, of course, more or less for administrative purposes, but the others have a considerable economic value. Proof of