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NEW ZEALAND.

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# MINES STATEMENT.

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

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MR. SPEAKER,—

In making this my third Statement, it gives me great pleasure to state that the mining industry is steadily progressing. The productions from our mines have hitherto consisted principally of gold and coal, which are not affected to any extent by fluctuations in price, as are most other articles of colonial produce. In every country there are periods of prosperity and depression, enterprise and stagnation, which cannot always be foreseen; but the principal element that affects the produce of gold is an inadequate supply of water in dry seasons. This could be provided against to a great extent if the water was more carefully conserved. There is no country in the world better watered than this colony, and in some seasons there is plenty and to spare; but if a system of conservation was effected, and all available sites used for dams and reservoirs, there would always be plenty of water to carry on mining operations. At the present time the water from every stream in the vicinity where mining is carried on is utilised to a certain extent by the miners, and where the water can be brought to command ground at a moderate cost it has been done; but there are many instances in which water is allowed to run to waste without being utilised, the whole of which should be conserved as far as practicable. It is true there is a difficulty in the way of persons holding inferior water-rights constructing dams or reservoirs in the bed of streams, notwithstanding there may be a splendid site where a large body of water could be stored at a small outlay. Those holding superior rights would not contribute to the cost; and those holding inferior rights would in dry seasons be compelled to allow a sufficient quantity of water to flow out of their reservoir to supply those holding prior rights, even were that quantity not coming into the reservoir from the stream from which these rights were granted. It is, however, possible to regulate this difficulty, so that a person holding the first rights from any stream could only claim his quantity if it was flowing into any dam or reservoir, and accordingly give more encouragement to parties to conserve the water.

There are numerous rivers and streams flowing at high velocities which, if properly utilised, are capable of giving a cheap motive-power to work the whole of the mining and other machinery in the colony, and, as there are generally only short distances between those rivers and streams, they can easily be used as a motive force to generate electricity as a motive-power for transmission to the different places where machinery requires to be erected, where direct water-power is not available, and thereby save the cost of fuel where steam machinery has to be employed. By this means, a lower grade of ore could be reduced and treated at a profit than at present.

It is gratifying to find that, by improvements in gold-saving appliances, both auriferous drifts and lodes can now be worked at a profit which a few years ago were considered almost valueless, and that the spirit of enterprise which has always characterized those interested in mining from the early days of the goldfields still continues to be of a progressive character. Mining has in the past been a great source of revenue to the colony, and will be so in the future. Were it not from the revenue derived from mining, a number of County Councils could not possibly maintain their roads and construct necessary works in their districts. Were it advisable, it would be impossible to induce those who have been mining for years to leave off that occupation and follow another calling. They are content to work for