

1909.
NEW ZEALAND.

MINES STATEMENT,

BY THE HON. RODERICK MCKENZIE, MINISTER OF MINES.

Mr. SPEAKER,—

In submitting to the House my first annual Statement, I shall refer briefly to the progress and development of the mining industry, the results of operations during the year under review, and the future prospects of increased production.

In order to better illustrate the beneficial influence of the mining industry on the progress and prosperity of our people in the past, I find it necessary to place before honourable members in tabulated form the value of the minerals produced since the early days of mining in this country. From these tables it will be apparent to the most superficial observer that mining has been, and will continue to be, one of the most important factors in promoting the development of most of our other industries. To the discovery of gold in New Zealand may easily be traced the rapid growth of this country, and to the present substantial production of our mines should be credited in a very large measure the prosperous land settlement that is continually going on.

The improvements in machinery for the reduction of refractory ores, combined with the developments that have taken place in the processes for generating and transmitting electrical power, promise in the immediate future to transform many of our low-grade ores and poor alluvial deposits into highly profitable mining propositions; while all the lakes, rivers, and waterfalls suitable for providing power for generating electrical energy will become valuable revenue-producing assets. Several inquiries have been made regarding the granting of water-rights for this purpose, and it is anticipated that there will be considerable development in this direction in the near future.

During the past year the mining industry has been carried on with its accustomed vigour, and on the whole with satisfactory results. There is a slight decrease, amounting in value to £16,712, in the bullion-production from our goldfields. This small decrease is, however, more than counterbalanced by a substantial increase in the output from our coal-mines. Considerable activity prevails on the bituminous coalfields of the West Coast, where new collieries on a large scale, including the No. 2 State Colliery at Seven-mile Creek, are in process of development. The output from these new properties, together with that of the mines at present operating, will be capable of providing all the coal-requirements of the Dominion, and also a surplus for export.

I regret to inform honourable members that there has been an unprecedented fall in the export of kauri-gum, amounting to £207,090. This is attributed to a cheaper substitute being employed in the manufacture of varnish in Europe and America. Inquiries are now being made with a view to improving the position if it is possible to do so.