

1930.  
NEW ZEALAND.

---

# PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT

(BY THE HON. W. B. TAVERNER, MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS).

MR. SPEAKER,—

Having taken over the portfolio of Public Works only a few weeks before the opening of the session it was not possible for me to make visits of inspection covering the extensive activities of the Department. The session has emphasized features in our public finance and in the social condition of a large section of our people, which must be taken into consideration in framing a statement for presentation to the House. Perhaps the most important from the point of view of a programme of expenditure on public works are:—

- (1) The fact that a Select Committee has been appointed to inquire into and consider the position respecting railways under construction; and
- (2) The fact that unemployment as revealed by the statistics of registration has increased rather than decreased.

The first factor is important in that it introduces an element of suspense in detailing items relating to expenditure on railway-construction. This Statement is necessarily prepared in regard to the position as I view it and the finance made available by the Minister of Finance for the year's programme of works. The second factor, however, it may otherwise be regarded, must weigh with all honourable members in balancing the pros and cons of one of the most difficult situations that has confronted Parliament since the end of the war. It is for the moment our most embarrassing problem, as it is reported to be in most civilized countries, and one that vitally concerns the Public Works Department, the largest employer of manual labour in the Dominion. I shall have occasion to revert to one or other of these factors in subsequent paragraphs.

The general position and certain aspects of policy dictated by our present circumstances may be briefly reviewed. Honourable members will perceive from a perusal of tabulations embodied in other parts of this document that public-works expenditure has steadily increased. During the last financial year the total