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# PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT

(BY THE HON. C. E. MACMILLAN, ACTING MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS).

MR. SPEAKER,—

As honourable members are aware, the control of the Public Works Department was placed in my hands during the absence of the Right Hon. the Minister of Public Works at the Ottawa Conference, and to enable my colleague on his return to New Zealand to give undivided attention to finalization of the many matters arising out of the Conference I have continued in an acting capacity. I have, however, during this short period given a good deal of attention to the work and administration of the Department in all its branches, and in my efforts I have had the willing assistance of all members of the staff.

As predicted in last year's Public Works Statement, it has been necessary, on account of the present difficult period, for the Government to provide as much work as possible, but I have made it my object to look very carefully into the expenditure of all loan-money for the purpose of reducing it to the lowest possible limit and of ensuring that it is spent to the best advantage.

The rate of public-works expenditure until the year 1930-31 had been steadily increasing, and last year the brake had to be vigorously applied, even though so much work had to be provided for those thrown out of employment by the depression in industry and trade.

It was certain that much the greater proportion of this work could not any longer be met by the expenditure of borrowed money. In consequence of this, as will be seen under the heading of "Expenditure" following these opening remarks, the expenditure has dropped from £8,388,529 in the financial year 1930-31 to £4,815,542 last year, and for the current year provision will be made for £2,634,700, or a little more than half last year's expenditure.

These figures apply almost entirely to the expenditure of borrowed money, and do not give the total sum expended under the control of the Public Works Department; but they do indicate that borrowing of money for public works is being reduced as rapidly as is consistent with all existing circumstances.

The activity of the Department itself, however, has not decreased in direct proportion to the reduction in loan expenditure. This is shown by the fact that although the proposed loan expenditure for the present financial year is only little more than one half of last year's, and under one-third of the previous year's, the gross cash expenditure for this year will be approximately £4,000,000, as compared with £5,787,771 last year and £8,098,301 for the previous year.