

irrespective of age or sex. They believe that these proposals will be greatly in advance of similar legislation in any other part of the world and that this measure, with the legislation already passed by my Government, will undoubtedly place the Dominion again in the van of progressive countries and assure to New Zealand the leadership of the world in humanitarian and social legislation.

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES :—

Realizing that the welfare of the Dominion is in fact the sum total of the welfare of the individual citizens, my Ministers regard the provision of employment as a most important element in the country's prosperity. The number of persons now in remunerative employment is, according to the latest statistics, the highest ever recorded, and the number of persons unemployed is now lower than was normal in the years before the depression.

During the past year a comprehensive and progressive policy of public works has been undertaken. Particular attention has been devoted to the Dominion's lines of communication by road and rail and to the development of aerodromes, and gratifying results have been obtained from the use of modern construction machinery, the cost of works having by this means been very materially reduced. The continuation of an energetic programme of public works is proposed for the current year. Further development of irrigation, river-control, and land-erosion works, the elimination of dangerous railway crossings, and an extension of settlement roading to provide improved transport facilities for the farming community will also be features of the public works to be undertaken.

The carrying-out of these necessary and desirable public works, combined with the policy which my Ministers have pursued of encouraging the establishment and development of such local industries as can be justified economically, has had beneficial results in providing profitable employment for many thousands of our people who previously were unemployed. A number of new industries have been commenced by private firms, while the decision, after all proper investigation, to establish a State iron and steel industry in New Zealand will, it is anticipated, represent an important advance in the development of the Dominion.

During the year financial assistance has been afforded by my Government to certain industries to enable them to continue operations, while in other cases new industries have been established with the aid of such assistance. There is abundant evidence of existing factories increasing their production, their productive capacity, and the number of their employees, and a number of overseas firms have already decided to manufacture their products in this country. The action of my Government has, in the opinion of my Advisers, greatly assisted in the maintenance and development of our manufacturing industries.

With the passing of the Petroleum Act last session a new era was inaugurated in regard to the development of oil in the Dominion, and the legislation enacted has induced several powerful companies to take up large areas for prospecting purposes. There is no doubt that serious efforts, with ample resources and experience behind them, are now about to be made in the search for oil in this country, and should they be successful oil may be expected to play a part in the national life of New Zealand comparable in importance with the discovery and development of gold.

The conservation and extension of our State forests is receiving the careful attention of my Ministers, and to accelerate progress in these objectives a five-year plan of forest works has been prepared to supplement normal operations. Certain exotic State forests have reached the utilization stage, and the establishment of sawmills, preservation plants, and boxmaking factories is being undertaken to use the splendid resources now available.