

The Sales Tax Bill will be introduced which will alter the existing sales tax legislation from a negative system in which all items are taxable unless specifically exempted to a system which will positively identify the liability of goods to sales tax.

The Government will give high priority to planning for adequate energy supplies to meet the reasonable needs of the community and to provide for economic development. In doing so it will consider carefully how to make the best possible use of indigenous resources. Close attention will be given to all energy conservation opportunities and to the scope for the future development of New Zealand's renewable energy resources.

The Government will continue to promote the orderly and economic development of all transport modes to obtain the best utilisation of resources for the benefit of the consumer.

In presenting legislation the Government will be guided by its strong belief that the family is the firm basis of New Zealand society.

The Government will introduce a Social Security Amendment Bill validating increases in the rates of Social Security benefits in accordance with the policy of adjusting benefits every six months.

The Children and Young Persons Act 1974 has now been in operation for about two years. In that time certain problems, mostly of a technical nature, have arisen and you will be asked to consider a Bill to clarify the intention of the Act and to make its operation more effective.

The law relating to divorce, separation, maintenance, and paternity will be revised and in line with the Government's policy, the sole ground for divorce will be the irretrievable breakdown of the marriage. The principle embodied in last year's Matrimonial Property Act, that on the dissolution of a marriage by divorce the matrimonial property belongs to both parties regardless of legal title, will be extended to the distribution of a married person's property when he or she dies.

The Government's policy of progressive law reform will be further advanced by several Bills implementing reports of the Law Reform Committees. It is also intended to review the Electoral Act 1957 and the Unit Titles Act 1972.

New Zealand has one of the lowest levels of unemployment amongst OECD countries, an achievement assisted by the extended use of Government-funded special work programmes. However employment growth is likely to remain at a low level during the remainder of this year. Despite this it is expected that the average unemployment level will be only slightly above last year's.

The special work programmes within the public sector will be continued as a major component of the Government's policy. Greater emphasis will however be given to assisting private employers to participate in similar schemes, thereby reflecting the Government's objective of redeploying resources in favour of the private sector.

The tight occupational controls which the Government implemented to reduce immigration from the abnormally high levels of 1974 and 1975 have operated successfully, and the number of immigrants has dropped to a level which is consistent with the country's ability to absorb them. Now that this level has been reached it will be possible to relax controls slightly so that as the need for skilled workers becomes apparent more immigrants can be granted entry.