



THE
NEW ZEALAND GAZETTE
EXTRAORDINARY.

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WELLINGTON, TUESDAY, JULY 15, 1879.

THE Fourth Session of the Sixth Parliament of New Zealand was on Friday, the 11th day of July, opened by Commissioners duly appointed; and the vacancy in the Speakership of the House of Representatives having meanwhile been filled by the election of George Maurice O'Rorke, Esq., His Excellency was, at the meeting of the Houses this day, pleased to make the following

S P E E C H.

HONORABLE LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

It is a great pleasure to me, so shortly after my assumption of the Government of this Colony, to meet the Legislative Council and the Representatives of New Zealand, in Parliament assembled.

During the limited time which has elapsed since my arrival, I have endeavoured as far as possible to make myself acquainted with the capabilities and requirements of the country, and to gain, by personal intercourse, a knowledge of its public men, and of the various communities spread throughout its wide extent.

The first impressions which I have formed are very favourable. I have been much gratified by the loyal and cordial reception which has everywhere been accorded to me as Her Majesty's Representative; and I have not failed to note with admiration the extent and variety of the resources of the country, and the industry and enterprise which are developing them with such marvellous rapidity.

I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to express to you, as representing both races of the people of New Zealand, my grateful acknowledgments for the welcome which has been extended to me, and to offer my congratulations upon the fair, healthy, and fertile country which Providence has given to you as an inheritance.

My Responsible Advisers fully recognize the desire that exists for the enactment of measures which will secure a more equal representation of the people; for a more frequent return of Members to their constituencies for re-election; for an equitable distribution of the burdens of taxation; and for a mode more just and judicious of dealing with public lands, and with those belonging to the Natives.

As a first step towards giving effect to these desires, the following measures will, amongst others, be laid before you :—

A Bill to amend the Law relating to Electors qualified to vote at the election of Members of the House of Representatives; and a Bill to make provision for the representation of the people in the General Assembly.

These measures, if they receive your sanction, will secure manhood suffrage on a residential qualification to Europeans, and will give the franchise to men of the Native race who are enrolled on a ratepayers' roll, or who hold individual or undivided grants from the Crown of land to a certain value. The effect of the measures will also be to adjust representation, as far as practicable, on the basis of population, and to limit the duration of future Parliaments to three years.

A measure will be submitted to you providing that in future Native reserve lands shall be dealt with only by public auction or public tender: thereby abolishing the present monopoly of dealing in such lands, securing the best price for the Native owners, and giving to every one an opportunity of competing for sales or leases.

It is also under consideration how far this principle of public auction might be fairly and beneficially applied to such Native lands as now remain unsurveyed, or the titles to which have not yet been investigated by the Court. The disposal of such lands, with the consent of the Native owners, under the existing land laws of the colony, would greatly promote the increase of settlement, while at the same time it would secure to the Native owners the full value of their estates. Inquiries are now being made to ascertain the opinions of the Natives generally, and, if acceptable to them, a Bill for this purpose will be laid before you.

The fanaticism which has prevailed on the West Coast of this Island for some years past has, during the recess, assumed a somewhat alarming appearance. The necessary steps have been taken to secure the peace of the district, and it is possible that a peaceful solution of the difficulty will be found. Papers in reference to this matter will be laid before you.

The negotiations with the Waikato Natives have been suspended, and all offers of settlement have been withdrawn, so that any future negotiations must be commenced on a new basis. The behaviour of Tawhiao and his people continues friendly and peaceful; and my Advisers have good reason to believe that these relations will be maintained. At the same time, the well-known Chief, Rewi, has given further important proofs of his good faith and loyalty. The attitude taken by him affords a guarantee for the continuance of peace; and the maintenance of this would, in a short time, lead to the opening up of the interior for settlement.

Generally the behaviour of the Native people has been loyal and peaceful.

Very great progress has been made in the acquisition of Native lands as public estate, especially in localities through which the proposed trunk lines of railway in the North Island are likely to pass.

GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

It will be gratifying to you to learn that the revenue received under nearly all heads during the past year has exceeded the estimated amount, the excess under such heads having amounted to about £190,000. Under the head of Land Revenue, a large deficiency has occurred; but it must be borne in mind that, whilst a deficiency of the Customs Revenue, or of any revenue of that character, would be an absolute loss to the Colony which could never be replaced, a falling-off of Land Revenue practically means only that so much less Crown land than was calculated on has been sold during the period in question. The Crown land, which is the capital of the country, still remains for sale, and can be sold when the progress of settlement will give it an enhanced value. The policy which you sanctioned last year, of reserving Crown land from sale in districts through which railways are in course of formation, until their construction is complete, will necessarily add to the value, and to the proceeds which may be anticipated from the sale of such lands. The falling-off in the sale of Crown land during the year may be attributed in part to the commercial depression which has prevailed throughout the world—fortunately less in New Zealand than elsewhere—but chiefly to the postponement of the sale of confiscated lands.

The probable continuance during the current financial year of a decreased Land Revenue renders it requisite, in the opinion of my Government, to impose fresh

taxation to meet the requirements of the Colony. In accordance with the principle of equalizing the incidence of taxation, a measure will be presented to you for imposing a tax on income. One result of that tax will be that, so soon as the finances of the country admit of it being done, the Legislature can lessen and ultimately abolish all duties which now press heavily on the necessaries of life and the springs of industry.

Those railways, which under the authority of Parliament have been completed between large centres of population, are now yielding a yearly revenue which not only meets the charge of their maintenance, but pays a large proportion of the interest on the cost of their construction. The estimated gross revenue of these railways for the current year is £950,000. They have given a greatly-enhanced value to property throughout the Colony, and have materially promoted the development of its resources. Encouraged by this experience, the Government propose to proceed vigorously with the construction of those lines which have already been or may hereafter be authorized by Parliament, the completion of which will be of great advantage to the entire community; and for that purpose a measure will be submitted to you authorizing an additional loan of £5,000,000 to be raised.

The Estimates which will be laid before you have been prepared with a careful regard for economy.

HONORABLE LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

My Advisers are of opinion that the present system of County local self-government should be placed on a better footing; and that this should be done without impairing the self-governing powers possessed by Road Boards and Municipalities. A Bill will therefore be submitted to you, for enabling County Councils to raise—under certain conditions, and subject to the assent of the ratepayers—loans for public works such as can now be raised by Municipalities. The Bill will contain provisions intended to encourage the union of two or more Counties for executing such works; but it will not be sought to withhold the powers from any County standing alone, provided the various conditions are complied with.

It would be manifestly impossible for the Government to present during this session measures which would effect in their entirety all the objects which have been indicated. Nevertheless, the measures which will be proposed are all in the direction which my Advisers believe to be consistent with the wishes of the country.

Amongst other important Bills to be submitted to you are—

A Bill to suspend Plurality of Voting in cases of Election to local governing bodies, whilst those bodies are subsidized out of the general revenue of the Colony:

A Bill for the better management and the maintenance of Hospitals and Charitable Institutions: and

A Bill to regulate the Immigration of Chinese.

In accordance with the intention stated in my Predecessor's Speech last session, a Royal Commission has been appointed to inquire into the subject of Higher Education. Papers on the subject will be laid before you.

I am confident that your careful attention will be bestowed on all measures which may be brought before you in the interests of the whole Colony. I desire to unite cordially with you in carrying out the wishes of our Most Gracious Sovereign for the welfare and happiness of Her Majesty's subjects of both races in New Zealand: and I humbly express my hope that Divine Providence may bless our endeavours to attain those beneficent ends.

