



THE
NEW ZEALAND GAZETTE
 EXTRAORDINARY.

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THE Second Session of the Seventh Parliament of New Zealand was this day opened by the Governor, when His Excellency was pleased to make the following

S P E E C H.

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

In accordance with what was understood to be the wish of both branches of the Legislature, I have called you together at an earlier period of the year than usual, and after an interval of little more than five months since the last session of Parliament.

When I last met you the country was suffering from severe monetary pressure and a general depression in various branches of industry and trade. It is satisfactory to me to be able, on the present occasion, to congratulate you upon the partial relief which has been experienced, and upon the degree of confidence which has been revived by an abundant harvest, and by the increased value of most of the staple products of the country. At the same time, the condition of the colony demands your careful consideration.

I regret that there should be a considerable amount of distress among the working classes. I trust and believe this may be only of a temporary character. It is engaging the serious attention of my Government, who have taken steps for inquiring into the means best calculated to encourage such local industries as will afford steady and remunerative employment to the people.

In accordance with the decision of the Legislature, I appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the alleged grievances of a portion of the Native race in respect to their lands on the West Coast of the North Island. The reports and recommendations of that Commission will be laid before you.

I trust that the measures at once firm and conciliatory which have been adopted by my Government will issue in a permanent and satisfactory settlement of the difficulties which have arisen in that part of the colony.

The determination which has been shown to redress grievances where they may be proved to exist, and at the same time to assert the supremacy of the Crown, cannot but favourably affect our relations with the whole Maori race.

The steps which should be taken for the defence of the harbours of the colony have been carefully considered and ably reported on by Colonel Scratchley, an experienced officer of the Royal Engineers. You will be asked to consider the extent to which it will be advisable to give effect to his suggestions.

GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

Carefully-prepared Estimates of the revenue and expenditure for the ensuing twelve months will be laid before you.

The facts elicited by the Commissioners whom I have appointed to inquire into the present position of the Civil Service will, I have no doubt, assist my Responsible Advisers in effecting substantial reductions in the cost of that Service.

I regret to have to announce to you that a falling off has taken place during the past financial period in almost all the principal items of revenue.

While this may in some measure be attributed to temporary causes, it would be unwise to ignore the fact that prior to the existing depression there had been a time of extraordinary inflation consequent upon the expenditure of large sums of borrowed money.

With the lessening of the abnormal influx of foreign capital, the country must look for a diminution in the rate of progress it has recently been accustomed to, both in respect of its ordinary and territorial revenue.

In these circumstances, my Advisers entertain no doubt as to the course to be pursued. Expenditure must be decreased; luxuries must be curtailed; the public works which have already been constructed must be made more reproductive. It is to industry and economy that the colony has to look for a development of its resources, and the maintenance of a healthy progress.

You will be asked to consider a plan which, it is believed, will place the finances of the local bodies on a satisfactory basis, and will enable those bodies to carry on their works in a self-reliant and independent manner.

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

At a time when it is indispensable that the closest attention should be bestowed upon the state of our finances, upon the solution of Native questions of grave importance, upon the settlement of the waste lands, and upon the general economy of administration, it is not the intention of my Government to ask you to devote a longer time to the work of legislation than will be required to complete the constitutional measures already initiated, and to deal with pressing questions of social and administrative reform.

Bills will be presented to you for consolidating and amending the Licensing Laws of the colony;—for placing the administration of Hospitals and Charitable Aid on a sound and intelligible basis;—for completing the changes in the Electoral Law which were commenced in the last session of Parliament;—for readjusting the representation of the people;—and for amending the laws affecting the dealing with Native lands, and the constitution of the Native Lands Court.

The work of consolidating the statutes, as authorised by you, has made considerable progress, and a number of Bills, the result of the labours of the Commission, will also be placed before you.

The necessity for revising the whole system of legal procedure now in force in the Supreme Court and in other Courts of the colony has forced itself upon the attention of my Government. The subject is too large to enter upon during the present session, but it is proposed to institute an inquiry, with the view of preparing such measures of reform as will render the administration of justice more speedy and efficacious, as well as less costly, than at present.

The work of opening up the waste lands of the Crown for settlement has been vigorously prosecuted, and blocks of land for occupation upon the deferred-payment and village-settlement systems have been set aside over a large portion of the colony.

The desire which exists for the occupation of land in small holdings exhibits a determination on the part of the people of the colony to devote themselves steadily to the development of its resources.

It is to be regretted that in some parts of the country land of this class has been bought on terms with which the purchasers have found it impossible to comply. The subject is under the careful consideration of my Government.

In now leaving you to the labours of the session, I have to assure you of my earnest desire to co-operate with you in your efforts to promote the welfare of the country, and to express my hope that God's blessing may rest upon your deliberations.