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**T**HE Third Session of the Eighth 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.

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

I have much pleasure in again meeting you in Parliament assembled.

Since the close of the last Session, a great affliction has fallen upon Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, through the sudden death of His Royal Highness the Duke of Albany.

Sincere sympathy has been felt by the whole British people with our beloved Sovereign in her bereavement; and the high character, noble aims, and beneficent pursuits of the Prince—which had endeared him to all amongst whom he had lived and worked—have caused his loss to be regarded as a national calamity.

I did not delay in assuring Her Majesty of the deep sympathy which was felt by the people of New Zealand in Her severe affliction.

When I first met the Assembly after my assumption of the Government, I expressed the satisfaction I had experienced in making myself acquainted with the people and the resources of the Colony, so far as I had then been able to visit different districts. During the last year, I have made a more extended tour through many parts of both Islands, and the manner in which I have been welcomed in all the places I have visited has been most cordial and gratifying. The impressions I had already formed of the great capabilities and prospects of the country have been much strengthened by all that I have lately seen.

The depression which has been felt during the past year in many parts of the world, has been intensified in New Zealand by the unseasonable weather which prevailed in some districts at harvest time. But this depression has largely resulted from external causes: the chief amongst them being the reduced values of the staple products of the country—wool and wheat. I trust, however, that a renewal of prosperity may, with confidence, be anticipated.

There can be no doubt that increased population and a more varied use of the soil would result in a large development of the vast natural resources of the Colony. Already new industries are springing up, with regard to which there is every reason to hope that the genial climate and the great fertility of New Zealand will enable the Colony to compete successfully with other countries in the markets of the world.

Having the fullest confidence that with a cessation of the causes that have led to temporary depression there will come a revival of trade and an increasing activity in all local industries, my Advisers have not hesitated steadily to prosecute the work of colonization, by assisting to introduce a class of immigrants acceptable to existing settlers, and nominated by them. They have also furthered the same work by disposing of the Crown Lands in such a manner as will, it is believed, promote their occupation by settlers who are able to aid in increasing the productive power of the country.

The plan of offering a proportion of the Crown lands for occupation on a system of perpetual lease, has met with considerable success. This result will be accepted with satisfaction generally; for the plan affords to the industrious settler all the permanency and security of freehold tenure, while it leaves his capital available for improvements and for stocking his land. You will be asked to extend the operation of this plan to other parts of the Colony besides its proclaimed Gold Fields.

You will be glad to find, from a return which will be presented to you, that during the past year there has been a considerable increase in the area of land taken up subject to residential conditions; and that, notwithstanding the difficulties under which the agricultural classes have been labouring, their engagements with the Crown have been met, on the whole, with creditable promptitude.

A proposal for dealing with pastoral lands in small areas will also be submitted to you.

It is a matter for congratulation, that while settlement within the Colony has been progressing, increased facilities for the disposal of its products in the Home market are being afforded through the establishment, by private enterprise, of Direct Steam communication with Great Britain.

Of special interest connected with the establishment of Direct Steam Service, and the general growth of Colonial Industries, is the fact that the great and rapidly-increasing consumption of Coal is being met by increased productiveness of the mines within the Colony, the annual importation of Coal having remained almost stationary for the last four years.

On the Gold Fields, much enterprise has been shown by the miners, during the year, in introducing machinery and opening quartz-mines, as well as in the application of new methods to the successful working of deep alluvial deposits. The yield of gold from quartz shows an increase over previous years; and although the total production for the Colony during the past year has not been equal to that of former years, there is satisfactory ground for believing that the average annual yield will in future be maintained.

The policy which has been pursued for some years, in dealing with the Native inhabitants of the Colony, is daily producing more friendly relations between the two races; and this satisfactory result is, I am assured, visible in almost every Native district.

Explorations for railway purposes, and surveys for ascertainment of title, over large areas of the North Island hitherto but little known to Europeans, have been carried on with such slight interruption as to show that the isolation until lately maintained by some of the tribes, no longer exists or is desired by them.

The progress which is being made in determining tribal boundaries in the North Island, will shortly leave little to be done beyond the work of subdividing and individualizing the Native tenure.

The time has arrived when a very material change in the mode of dealing with Native Lands is called for, in the interests alike of the Maori and the European population.

A Bill will accordingly be laid before you, to regulate the sale or other disposal of land belonging to aboriginal Natives. Experience has proved that the abandonment of the exclusive right of purchase by the Crown has not produced the beneficial results which were anticipated by the promoters of that policy; but that, on the

other hand, direct dealing for Maori land by Europeans, has been open to objections of a very grave character. The good of the Colony, not less than the interest of the Natives, requires a complete change; and a Bill will be submitted to you by which it will be proposed to permit the disposal of Native land only through the Land Boards of the Colony, or by direct sale to the Crown.

Papers relating to the work of the West Coast Commission will be laid before you, together with a final report on the subject from the Commissioner. Sir William Fox has for several years devoted himself with great care, attention, and discretion to the fulfilment of the duties of that office; and the Colony has good reason to be satisfied with the manner in which he has completed the work entrusted to him.

GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

The estimates of revenue and expenditure for the current year, will be laid before you very shortly.

The lessened income from the principal industries of the country has led to greater frugality of living among the people; and during the past financial year the receipts from some of the principal sources of revenue have consequently fallen short of the amounts they were estimated to yield. This reduction in the colonial revenue calls for greater economy and diminished expenditure in the Public Service.

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

When I had the pleasure of meeting you, at the opening of last Session, discussion was proceeding between my Government and the Governments of Australia, respecting concerted action to induce the Imperial Government to establish British rule, or protection, over certain islands of the Pacific. I then informed you that I had telegraphed to the Secretary of State, expressing my full concurrence in the desirableness of the proposed action. It was, before the end of the session, announced to Parliament that it was determined to hold a Convention, to consider the questions of Confederation and Annexation, and that it would be attended by representatives of New Zealand.

I readily consented to accredit the Premier and the Honourable Sir Frederick Whitaker, his predecessor in office, to attend the Convention on behalf of this Colony. The meeting took place at Sydney, during the months of November and December last, and afforded an opportunity for the discussion of several matters affecting intercolonial interests. The Report of the Convention will be at once presented to you.

Papers will also be laid before you relating to Confederation and Annexation, and to the action taken and proposed to be taken by the French Government with regard to the transportation of convicts and relapsed criminals to these seas.

You will be invited to consider certain resolutions of the Convention, especially those concerning the convict question; and also to consider a draft Bill having for its object the establishment of a Federal Council. The provisions of this Bill in no way affect the powers of the several Colonies respecting the control of their own affairs; but it is deemed to be of importance that there should be a body having authority to act in matters of Australasian concern, as to which individual Colonies would be powerless, or be capable of no more than weak or dilatory action. Any action taken from time to time by the Imperial Government would be greatly facilitated by the existence of a body representing united Australasia, with which they might confer on matters concerning the relations between this part of the Empire and foreign countries.

Returns will be laid before you from which you will learn that there was during the year a large increase in the traffic on the railways, indicating a considerable growth in the industries of the Colony. But it was found during the last few months, that, notwithstanding this increase, there would be a deficiency in the actual receipts as compared with the estimates which were submitted to you last session. Large expenditure had also become indispensable, not only for providing necessary appliances, but also for affording increased facilities to those using the lines. In these circumstances, the Government decided to exercise the power given to them by the Legislature, and to raise the tariff of charges to a rate nearly equal to that which, without bearing unfairly upon any class, had formerly been in

force, rather than allow the expense of carriage upon the railways to fall on the general taxation of the country.

Careful surveys have been made of different routes proposed for the Main Trunk Railway through the North Island. Reports as to these, showing their respective merits and the character of the country traversed by each, will be laid before you. In accordance with the terms of the "North Island Main Trunk Railway Loan Act, 1882," your approval will be asked for that route which is shown to offer, upon the whole, the greatest advantages.

A Bill will be introduced having for its object to establish the Civil Service on a more satisfactory basis. By its provisions it will be sought to give to the Officers of the Service a confidence in their status, as defined by legislation, which cannot but be beneficial to them and to the public they serve. At the same time, a guarantee will be afforded that appointments will be the reward of merit, and that promotion will be open, in all departments of the Service, to those who prove themselves efficient.

Amongst other measures submitted for your consideration, will be—

A Bill to provide for the Carriage of Parcels by Post.

A Bill to amend the Regulation of Elections Act.

A Bill to alter the Constitution of certain City Electorates.

A Bill to consolidate and amend the Law relating to the Qualification and Registration of Voters, and to provide for the issue of Electors' Rights.

A Bill to amend the Law relating to the Property of Married Women.

A Bill to facilitate the Alienation of Land.

I do not doubt that the circumstances of the Colony, and the provisions of the measures brought before you, will receive your most careful and earnest consideration; and I trust that your decisions may, by God's blessing, tend to the happiness and well-being of the people of New Zealand.