



THE

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EXTRAORDINARY.

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

SPEECH.

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

I have much pleasure in again having recourse to your assistance in Parliament assembled.

The depression that was prevalent throughout the colony when you met last year shows signs of passing away. In many parts, notwithstanding the low price of wool and wheat, satisfactory evidence is apparent of renewed enterprise and of confidence in the future progress of the colony.

The loyal disposition of the Maoris, and the readiness they have displayed in aiding the construction of the Northern Trunk Railway, must be exceedingly gratifying to you. My Ministers desire in dealing with the Natives to treat them with justice and consideration, whilst at the same time the law is maintained. There are throughout the Native territory many signs that the attitude of the Maoris is not only peaceful but friendly. Tribes and hapus hitherto standing aloof from Europeans have shown an earnest desire to cooperate heartily with the Government. My Advisers are of opinion that in order to avoid misunderstanding in the future it is most important that a better mode of dealing with Native lands should be devised. To accomplish this in a manner just to the Maori owners and beneficial to the colony they propose to submit to you a Bill to regulate the sale and other disposition of lands belonging to the Natives.

The construction of the North Island Main Trunk Railway, which was happily inaugurated near Kihikihi in April last, cannot fail to have a most beneficial effect on the relations between the European and Native races; and, as land is provided for settlement along the line, the North Island will doubtless make great strides in permanent agricultural settlement.

My Ministers have proceeded cautiously but effectively with the prosecution of other public works. They hope that at no distant date the railway between Wellington and Napier will be finished. Rapid progress is being made in the construction of the Otago Central Railway, which, when completed, will open up the interior plains of that provincial district.

No time was lost in making an agreement under the East and West Coast and Nelson Railway Act. My Ministers are in hopes that, in accordance with its provisions, Nelson and the West Coast will before long be connected with the East Coast of the Middle Island, and that a vast area of land, which, from its nature, requires a railway to develop it, will become available for useful purposes. The gain to the colony from opening these lines of communication with the West Coast my Ministers consider will be of immense importance, whilst the utilization of the land, of which the colony will retain alternate blocks, must prove of great service.

You will be asked to consider whether the effective working of the railways opened for traffic could not be improved by the constitution of Boards of Commissioners, to whom would be entrusted the general management of the railways. In order to enable you to deal with this subject my Ministers will submit a Bill for your consideration.

In accordance with the authorities given by Parliament in 1882, and by you last session, the loans of £1,000,000 and £1,500,000 have been raised, and exceedingly satisfactory prices obtained. Papers on the subject will be laid before you.

The Industrial Exhibition in Wellington will shortly be opened, and my Advisers believe that through it an impetus will be given to manufacturing enterprise throughout the colony. You will be asked to authorize the representation of the colony at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, to be held in London next year. A great opportunity will thus be afforded of making known throughout the world the vast resources and natural advantages of this colony.

Considerable attention has been given to the promotion of agricultural settlement. The special settlements formed under the regulations lately gazetted promise to prove a great success. Applications far exceeding the area at present available by law have been received by the Lands Department.

The constitution of the Legislative Council has often been discussed. A Bill dealing with the subject by limiting the appointments to a term of years will be submitted for your consideration.

GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

The estimates of revenue and expenditure for the current year will be laid before you without delay. They have been framed with the desire to promote the utmost economy consistent with the efficiency of the departments.

My Ministers believe that the time has come when there should be some readjustment of taxation, and proposals with this object will shortly be submitted to you.

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

For some time during the recess considerable apprehension existed of an outbreak of war with Russia. My Ministers, therefore, felt it necessary to make immediate and strenuous efforts to place the colony in a state of defence. With this object considerable expense has been incurred, to which you will no doubt readily assent. The main ports are being put in a state to resist attack, and it will be proposed to you to sanction further expenditure to render the defence of the colony still more complete. You will be invited to express your views on the question both of naval and land defences.

There has been throughout the colony a desire to improve the system of local government. My Ministers consider that any reform attempted should interfere as little as possible with existing institutions so long as the objects sought can be attained. They have prepared for your consideration various Bills making provision for granting local bodies larger powers, with a more assured local finance, thus enabling them to perform their important functions without continually referring to the central Government or to Parliament for aid and assistance.

The attention of my Ministers has been much directed to the development of the great mineral wealth of the colony. The interest and enthusiasm awakened in the miners by the lectures recently delivered on chemistry and mineralogy, and their desire for the permanent establishment of schools of mines, demonstrate the confidence these enterprising settlers have in their pursuits. You will be asked to give further facilities to the mining industry.

There are other industries which require your careful attention. The forests of the colony, if properly utilized, would not only give useful employment to many colonists, but their value would be greatly enhanced. Much valuable timber is now being recklessly destroyed, and it will be for you to consider whether, for economic as well as climatic reasons, greater efforts should not be made to conserve and utilize the forest lands of the Crown. A Bill on the subject has been prepared, and will be submitted to you.

The fisheries, though known to be valuable, have hitherto received very little notice. Proposals to found fishing settlements and to aid in the development of fishing industries will be laid before you, and I have no doubt they will receive your careful consideration.

The relations of New Zealand to the Australian Colonies and the South Sea Islands have occupied the attention of Ministers during the recess. My Ministers considered it their duty to oppose the Federal Council Bill, in the shape it was brought before the Imperial Parliament, until you could have an opportunity of expressing your views on the subject. The new mail service to the South Sea Islands which you authorized will, it is hoped, strengthen the commercial relations and increase the trade between them and New Zealand. Correspondence with the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with the Premiers of the Australian Colonies, and with the King of Samoa, will be laid before you.

Dispensing aid to the poor and sick has proved, especially since the abolition of the provinces, a difficult task. My Ministers think that such aid cannot be effectively administered by a central Government, but should be locally controlled. A Bill with this object will be submitted to you.

I commend to your careful consideration Bills which will be brought before you for various purposes, amongst others for consolidating the Land Laws, for limiting the Liability of Insurance Companies' Shareholders, for codifying the Criminal Law, for consolidating the various Municipal Corporation Acts, the Native Land Laws, and the Land Transfer Acts, and for establishing a system of Parcel Post and for the issue of Postal Notes.

I earnestly hope that, with the blessing of God, you may be enabled to discharge your arduous duties with good effect.

