



THE
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 EXTRAORDINARY.

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THE Second Session of the Eleventh 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,—

It gives me much pleasure again to meet you in Parliament assembled.

I have been much gratified during the autumn months of this year to meet in many places numerous gatherings of our fellow-subjects of the Maori race. The reception in all cases accorded to me as Her Majesty's representative was such as I can recall with unmixed satisfaction. In particular, I was glad to be able to traverse a portion of the country of the Uriwera Tribe, hitherto so seldom visited by Europeans. There the welcome given to me by no means fell short in cordiality of that bestowed upon me elsewhere, and left upon me the pleasant impression that this famous tribe has now at any rate ceased to be dangerously dominated by the persistent desire for isolation attributed to it for many years past.

I am able, upon the whole, to congratulate you upon the continued evidences of the soundness of the colony's financial position, and the substantial progress made by its chief industries. The provision made during the session of 1890 for carrying on the public services has proved more than sufficient. The elasticity of the colony's resources has been again shown by a further increase in the already remarkable volume of our exports. This has now attained dimensions sufficient to convince the most apprehensive that the resources of New Zealand are far more than sufficient for the fulfilment of all her obligations.

At the same time, my Ministers think it would be a mistake to ignore the unfortunate exodus of population from our shores to the neighbouring colonies which still goes on without abatement. The returns of the census now in course of completion, satisfactory and encouraging as they are in most respects, appear to show that a stream of emigration, constant, though not large, has continued to flow from

these Islands to Australia. My Ministers consider that this strange phenomenon—for such it must be considered in so young and richly-endowed a country as this—is well worthy both of systematic investigation and of the application and persevering use of rational remedies.

The alienation of the waste lands of the Crown has been going on during the last twelve months at a rapid rate. My Ministers, however, are of opinion that for some years past the amount of actual settlement effected has not been quite commensurate with the somewhat large area of land disposed of. While it is doubtless true that a number of genuine settlers have taken up land, it seems also unfortunately to be the case that in many instances selection, instead of bringing about occupation and cultivation, has only meant acquisition for speculative purposes, or additions to estates already sufficiently, if not, indeed, injuriously large. Amendments in the land-laws, designed rigidly to reserve the remainder of our Crown lands for genuine occupation and improvement, will therefore be laid before you. My Advisers propose that the utility of this legislation shall be augmented by regulations designed and administered with the view of planting an increasing number of small but thriving occupiers upon the soil.

My Advisers are convinced that improved and vigorous methods of settling the waste lands of the Crown, however necessary and valuable, do not by any means comprise the whole scope of the work of settlement. Side by side with the opening-up of Crown lands should go the acquisition of portions of the vast tracts still held by the Native tribes of the North Island. Moreover, the time seems to be approaching when the immense task of repurchasing parts of the large private estates which now bar settlement in some of the most fertile parts of the colony must be entered upon, and undertaken with caution, justice, and discrimination. During the recess a Royal Commission, composed of gentlemen of long and special experience of the customs and opinions of the Native race, has carefully investigated the working of the complicated, costly, and cumbrous array of laws which has for so many years rather hindered than advanced the course of dealing with and settlement upon Maori tribal lands. The full and interesting report prepared by the Commissioners will be laid before you, and you will be invited to give your assent to laws carefully framed to further the undoubted desire of the great majority of Native owners to dispose of their superfluous lands on fair terms.

I have observed with regret that the past year has been marked by a distinct and discouraging decline in the yield of our goldfields. During the last three months, however, the mining returns indicate a considerable improvement.

It is very gratifying to find that the output from the several coal-mines of the colony is steadily increasing, and has attained an amount hitherto unknown in the colony. With this increased output from our own coal-mines, there is a corresponding decrease in the quantity of coal imported. Proposals for promoting the development of the mining industries of the colony by legislation and other means will be submitted to you.

In accordance with the decision arrived at by the late Parliament, three delegates from this colony attended the National Australasian Convention held at Sydney in the months of March and April last. The Hon. Sir H. A. Atkinson, Sir George Grey, K.C.B., and Captain Russell were accredited for that purpose. The official record of the proceedings of the Convention will be laid before you. At the Postal Conference held at Sydney about the same time this colony was represented by the Postmaster-General.

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,—

I deeply regret that within a period of a very few months your Council has been deprived by death of three much-esteemed members. One of these—your late Speaker, Sir William Fitzherbert—had completed a public career of more than ordinary length and distinction.

GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

The estimates of revenue and expenditure will be laid before you. The estimates of expenditure have been framed with a due regard to economy. In continuance of the work of retrenchment begun in 1886 and carried on by the last

Parliament, my Ministers have not hesitated to reduce the cost of their different departments wherever this could be fairly and prudently done. In this way substantial savings have been effected, the details of which you will, as a matter of course, have every opportunity to discuss.

My Ministers are of opinion that the time has come for effecting a bold reform of the chief part of the direct taxation as now levied, and Bills have been prepared for this purpose. In these proposals, however, my Advisers have studiously borne in mind that financial changes should, as a matter of expediency, be made gradually, so as neither to shake the public sense of security nor to run the risk of any inconvenient loss of revenue.

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

A measure will be submitted to you providing for the reform of the Legislative Council in a manner which, my Advisers believe, will be found to be in accord with public expectation.

It will be in your recollection that some time since the Imperial Government invited this colony to enter into an arrangement by which the rate of postage to Europe would be reduced to 2½d. per letter. The late Parliament signified its wish that this arrangement should be made, and this has accordingly been done, with most satisfactory results. Following on this you will be asked to assent to a still more important postal change which it is thought should be acceptable to all sections of the community.

Returns will be laid before you containing information of the results of all branches of traffic upon the railways. These will present one or two features calling for your special attention.

There are now ready for your consideration Bills for consolidating and amending the law relating to electors and elections, and for completing the abolition of plural voting; for classifying and improving the Civil Service, amending the law affecting goldmining and the working of our coalfields, altering and consolidating the law of bankruptcy, defining the law of libel, amending the laws relating to companies and to juries, fixing the liability of promoters and directors of companies, and consolidating and codifying the criminal law; as well as other Bills dealing with matters of public interest. These Bills will shortly be placed before you.

My Advisers propose to prosecute with vigour the construction of reproductive public works out of such moneys as are or may become available for the purpose. In letting contracts for public works my Advisers have endeavoured to discourage the practice known as "subcontracting," and they propose, as far as possible, to encourage the association of workmen on the co-operative principle.

In the session of last year a number of Bills dealing with matters referred to in the report of the "Sweating" Commission, and with other matters of special interest to employers and employed, were introduced, but only one passed into law. My Advisers propose to again introduce these Bills, with certain amendments, and will ask you to give them your earliest and most careful consideration. In addition to these, another Bill providing for the establishment of Boards of Conciliation and Courts of Arbitration to deal with industrial disputes has been prepared, and will be laid before you. My Advisers believe that a measure of this nature is earnestly desired by thoughtful observers of the many and undiminishing difficulties which beset the relations of labour to capital.

I commend these matters to your attention; I assure you of my heartfelt wish to aid your efforts to further the interests of the country; and I pray that your labours may, with the blessing of God, promote the happiness and welfare of the people of New Zealand.

