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 EXTRAORDINARY.

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THE Fourth Session of the Eleventh 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,—

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

Since last session I have been enabled to visit in succession the various centres of population, and the principal provincial districts of the colony. As Her Majesty's representative I was everywhere received in the most loyal and cordial manner. In common with all visitors to New Zealand, I have been struck with the charm and magnificence of her natural scenery, the more remarkable examples of which, on account of their immense material value, demand, I think, greater national care than has yet, perhaps, been bestowed upon them. I was also impressed with the generally prosperous and comfortable appearance of the settlers.

I very greatly regret that death has recently deprived the colony of another very distinguished colonist in the person of the late Premier, Mr. John Ballance. This regret is increased by the reflection that he died at a time of life when it might only have been expected that his marked abilities and high character would still for a number of years be available in the service of his country. His death, which occurred after a lingering illness, was undoubtedly hastened by single-minded devotion to public duty. It is satisfactory to notice the widespread manifestation of sorrow and sympathy by which the people of this and the neighbouring colonies have evinced their deep feeling at the loss of so faithful a public servant.

Once more I am able to congratulate you upon the buoyancy of the public finances, the continued prosperity of the country, and the soundness and marked improvement of the colony's industries. Again, also, I am able to state that the provision made during last session for carrying on the public services has proved more than sufficient.

The public accounts show a gross surplus of revenue over expenditure unparalleled in the history of the colony. The volume of our exports, though slightly less in value owing to the fall in price of certain staple products, shows by its larger bulk that the producing-power of the country is still steadily growing.

The influx of arrivals from the Mother-country and Australia has now assumed proportions which have put quite beyond doubt the complete termination of the long and discouraging exodus of our people.

The distress unhappily prevailing in several of the neighbouring colonies has lately been sufficiently acute to cause my Advisers to take steps to warn destitute persons from resorting to New Zealand in search of employment. Though the number of such passengers arriving in New Zealand has been small, it must be remembered that our carefully-restricted expenditure and the low prices of some of our products limit to a certain extent the expanding-power of the labour market.

The passing-away of the recent disastrous monetary panic in Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland may be expected to enable these colonies before very long to once more absorb their own surplus labour.

It is with satisfaction that I notice that New Zealand has remained entirely unaffected by the extraordinary panic just mentioned—an escape which affords emphatic testimony to the far-sighted prudence of our public and private finance during recent years, and is a high tribute to the thrift and industry of our people, and the confidence they have in the resources of the colony.

The returns to be laid before you by the Lands Department will show how satisfactory has been the rate of genuine settlement during the past twelve months.

You will be invited to give your most careful consideration to proposals dealing with the purchase of the Cheviot Estate. My late Advisers acquired the property in the interest at once of the public finance and the progress of settlement. It is the confident hope of my Advisers that the outcome of the purchase will be the successful settlement of a considerable territory in the centre of a district hitherto as remarkable for the sparsity of its population as for the attractions of its soil and climate.

You will be asked to address yourselves at an early period of the session to the important task of reforming the Native-land laws, the complicated nature of which has, in the opinion of my Advisers, retarded the progress of settlement. My Ministers are of the opinion that this question must be grappled with, and laws enacted which will place the rights of the Natives and Europeans on a just and equitable basis. Though the purchase of Native lands has been carried on during the last two years at a much more rapid rate than during the period immediately preceding, my Advisers are of opinion that the time has arrived when the large surplus areas of fertile land held by the Native race should be used and occupied in such a manner as will add to the productiveness of the colony. To this end Bills will be laid before you so drafted as to provide all reasonable safeguards for the interests of the present owners of these lands. In addition to this, my Advisers have come to the conclusion that certain areas of those Native lands which have hitherto escaped the burden of local taxation should now be placed on the same footing as the holdings of European settlers.

The improvement in the yield of our goldfields, upon which I congratulated you last year, has been further sustained, in marked contrast to the returns of so many recent years.

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,—

On the advice of my Ministers I have added to your numbers twelve gentlemen of approved character and capacity. And I trust that this addition to your numbers will add weight to your deliberations, energy to your actions, and strength to your constitutional position.

HONOURABLE 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 strict regard to economy.

The excess of receipts over the estimate under the Land- and Income-tax Act has proved that the expectations of my Advisers were fully justified.

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

Returns will be laid before you showing you the results of traffic in all branches of the railways. You will be asked to assent to a Bill restoring to the

representatives of the people a portion of the control which they formerly possessed over this important possession of the nation.

The carrying-on of public works during the last year has been notable for the success attending the system of co-operative contracts.

The Department of Labour has succeeded in dealing with excellent effect with congestion of the labour-market wherever it has occurred.

You will be asked again to consider the Electoral Bill, and to pass measures dealing with the extended jurisdiction of the Magistrates' and District Courts. Bills will also be placed before you dealing with Municipal Corporations, and the placing of the banking institutions on such a basis as will afford greater financial security. The Conciliation and Arbitration Bill of last year has been revised, and will be laid before you at the earliest possible date, together with a Bill in substitution for the present Shops and Shop-assistants Act.

Several measures relating to the wage-earners and workmen of the colony are ready for your consideration. Amongst these are Bills to amend the law relating to shipping and seamen, to further secure the wages of workmen, to repeal and amend the conspiracy laws bearing on trades disputes, to deal with "sweating" contracts, to facilitate the collection of industrial statistics, and others.

I ask you to give these matters your attention, I assure you of my earnest wish to aid your efforts for the well-being of this colony, and I pray that your labours may, with God's blessing, tend to promote the happiness and prosperity of the people of New Zealand.

