



THE
NEW ZEALAND GAZETTE
 EXTRAORDINARY.

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THE First Session of the Twelfth 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 great pleasure to meet you in Parliament assembled.

During the present year I have been enabled to visit Rarotonga, and other parts of the Hervey Group indirectly connected with this colony. There I was not only charmed with the romantic scenery of that beautiful cluster of islands, but I was gratified by the uniformly loyal and friendly greeting accorded me by the natives. They appear to be both fairly happy and contented, and thoroughly satisfied with the protection given them by the Queen's rule. My observations led me to conclude that a fair opening exists there for developing a useful trade with New Zealand.

The protracted confusion still disturbing Samoa has induced my Advisers to urge upon the Imperial Government that England should utilise this colony to control and manage the Navigator Islands. It is obvious that the triple control contemplated by treaty has been as unsatisfactory to the great Powers concerned as it has been injurious to Samoa. It is so clearly the destiny of New Zealand to play a leading part in Polynesia that my Advisers confidently expect your concurrence in the suggestion made by them.

Papers relating to the Postal Conference held here will be laid before you. The Imperial importance of the Conference now assembling at Ottawa has been recognised by my Ministers, who have therefore despatched thither a gentleman of approved standing and commercial experience to represent New Zealand.

Though I cannot congratulate you either upon an abundant harvest or upon high prices to be obtained for the colony's staple products, I nevertheless think that the position of New Zealand affords matter for real satisfaction. Natural causes, the state of the Home markets, and the caution instilled into financial institutions, presumably by the late Australian panic, have undoubtedly thrown temporary difficulties in the path of rapid progress. Nevertheless, the energy and the courage of our colonists, and the resources of the country, have never been more clearly displayed. Thanks to these, and to the prudence and success of the financial policy sanctioned by the late Parliament, the volume of our products continues to increase,

our colony's credit stands pre-eminent in London, public and private indebtedness diminishes relatively to our numbers, and the unemployed are proportionately fewer than in almost any other civilised country. Figures collected at the ports of entry and departure for the last five months show that the influx from Australia of men in search of employment has for the present virtually ceased.

Once more I am enabled to state that the provision made last year for carrying on the public service has proved much more than sufficient. The accounts will show you both a gross and a net surplus of revenue over expenditure of a most solid and gratifying kind.

Certain proposals will be laid before you, whose object will be to enable the Government to carry on the absolutely needful work of settlement without either impairing the colony's credit or laying intolerable burdens upon the taxpayer.

It appears to my Advisers that the time has arrived for the State to be no longer satisfied with carrying on, as well as its finances permit, a certain share of the work of colonisation. Some effort should now be made by which the Government, without incurring dangerous obligations, may aid private enterprise to avail itself, on reasonable terms, of the vast supplies of English capital the holders of which are only awaiting openings for secure investment.

The scandalous mismanagement which led to the suspension of an important company bearing the name of this colony has impressed upon my Advisers the necessity for safeguarding shareholders and the public against loose methods of company management. A measure will be introduced for this purpose.

You will be asked to take up an important work begun, but left unfinished, by the late Parliament. I refer to the business of making the Native land laws simpler, and the methods of acquiring Native land easier and speedier. In the opinion of my Ministers the time has come when private dealings in Native land should entirely cease, and when every title granted for such lands should be given directly from the Government under the Land Transfer Act. I notice with pleasure that the action of the validation law of last year promises to be as satisfactory to the settlers on the East Coast as was the effect of the West Coast Settlement Act to those on the opposite side of this Island. Still, my Advisers think that a fair share of your time this session cannot be better devoted than to the Native-lands question. Exhaustive inquiries among the Maori race seem to show that the tribes generally are ready and willing to co-operate in this matter.

Hand-in-hand with the steady acquisition of Native land must go the repurchase of private lands for closer settlement. Three years ago my predecessor drew the attention of the late Parliament to this. Since then the results of acquiring the valuable Cheviot Estate and certain other smaller areas have been so entirely successful as to lead my Advisers to ask you for further powers to enable them to carry on the work with all needful vigour. To this end the Land for Settlements Bill rejected last year will again be brought forward, with certain extensions and improvements.

You will be pleased to learn that the process of settling the waste lands of the Crown has gone on during the past year with unabated speed, and with genuinely good results.

You will be asked also to pass into law measures for enabling the Agricultural Department to effectually help and regulate the rapidly-growing dairy industry by a system of grading and cool-storage. Other Bills, intended to be of practical use to farmers and stockowners, will be laid before you.

The yield from our goldfields cannot be said to have increased during the past year; yet, by improvements in appliances, as well as in the methods of treatment in both alluvial and quartz mining, considerable areas have been worked successfully which could not in former years have yielded profit.

A Bill will be laid before you which it is hoped will aid in attaching to the soil the miners now spread over our gold-bearing country. If, by improving their present unsatisfactory occupation tenures, they can be given an interest and stake in the land, it is thought that the change will tend to the good at once of themselves, the mining districts, and the colony.

You will be afforded full opportunity to consider the liquor question. A Bill will be brought in to consolidate and amend the licensing law, and simplify the

procedure at the local-option polls. My Advisers desire to make it plain that they have no wish that this important matter should be approached by members in any other spirit than that of adherence to public pledges and individual convictions.

During the recess the term of office of the late Railway Commissioners expired. In accordance with what was believed to be the intention of the Legislature which passed "The Government Railways Act, 1887," and with the wish of the country as expressed at the late elections, a change was made in the *personnel* of the Commission. At the same time care was taken to leave you entire power to arrange for the future management of the national railways in such a way as you may deem proper.

GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

I think it fitting to take notice of a feature of peculiar interest belonging to this Parliament. You are the first body of New Zealand legislators elected under the law granting the suffrage to women. I have to congratulate the colony upon the quiet and peaceful course of the elections held under these novel conditions.

I trust that by your aptitude for business and zeal for the country's welfare you will show yourselves in no way inferior to the members of former Parliaments, and thus justify the hopes of the framers and passers of the Electoral Act.

In order to aid you in the conduct of your House's business, new Standing Orders, containing highly important changes, will be submitted to you. You will be asked to give them precedence over all other matters. While loth to seem to interfere in any way with old-established customs and privileges, my Advisers have been driven to think that the time has arrived for a bold reform of procedure. Experience has forced them to conclude that under the honoured name of "parliamentary privilege" has been masked in practice the discomfort, if not slavery, of a majority of your members. It is notorious that the license of prolix speech indulged in by a few has continually led to the enforced silence of debaters capable of stating relevant facts and contributing valuable suggestions within a reasonable compass of words. My Advisers think that the truest method of safeguarding your House's freedom will be found in forms under which members will be free to despatch business with speed and comfort.

Estimates of the revenue and the expenditure of the year will be laid before you. The estimates of expenditure have been framed with due regard to economy.

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

Measures will be submitted to you designed to further simplify the administration of justice, and to consolidate the law on various subjects. The moment appears fitting for reprinting the statutes at present in force, and my Advisers recommend that a Commission for the purpose should be set up.

The important principle of levying rates upon land-values only will again be urged upon your acceptance; and a Bill intended to prevent loans at usurious rates of interest will be presented for your consideration.

During last Parliament a number of measures designed especially to improve the condition under which the manual labourers of the country work were read in the House of Representatives, but only one finally became law. This is exactly what happened in the last session before the dissolution of 1890. Then, as now, there followed a very plain expression of public opinion in favour of passing not only the rejected Bills, but other measures of the same kind. My Advisers therefore propose to press forward both the labour Bills of last year, and certain new measures relating to factories, apprentices, and indiscriminate immigration. The measure last referred to, involving as it does an important question of policy, will be introduced at an early period of the session.

I desire you to give these matters your attention. I earnestly assure you of my wish to aid your exertions for the good of the colony. I pray that your efforts may, with God's blessing, promote the happiness and wellbeing of the people of New Zealand.

