



THE
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 EXTRAORDINARY.

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THE Second 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 again to meet you in Parliament assembled.

I was able during the recess to visit the Snares, Auckland, Campbell, Antipodes, Bounty, and Chatham Islands. In connection with my visit to these interesting but little-known isles, I must express my regret at the almost complete disappearance from them of the fur-seals, once so numerous there. I invite your attention to this undoubted national loss.

I am able very gladly to congratulate you upon more than one aspect of the present state and future prospects of the colony. The depression, which was so universally felt during the spring and summer, began to pass away before the end of autumn, and has now unquestionably given place to renewed hope. Several of our staple products, notably wheat, have risen in price. The improvement in the market for kauri gum has been a matter of congratulation, chiefly, of course, for the Province of Auckland; the better demand for timber has affected many districts. With the recent partial recovery in the price of frozen mutton may be coupled the success of the important experiments lately made in shipping live-stock and chilled beef to London. The revival of quartz-mining, so noteworthy for months past in the Auckland goldfields, appears likely to have a counterpart on the west coast of the South Island. There is solid reason for anticipating that mining will, for some time to come, both employ more labour and yield more gold than for years past. Useful as the cyanide process of extracting gold has been, it is not to be gainsaid that the royalty exacted under the patent rights of Cassell's Company has been a heavy burden on the back of mining enterprise. Therefore, as the English Courts have upset the patent, my Ministers have taken steps to have it set aside in this colony.

The state of the public finances of New Zealand continues to be fair ground for almost unmixed national satisfaction. Once more I am able to say that the

provision made during last session for carrying on the public services has proved more than sufficient. The public accounts show a surplus of revenue over expenditure—a surplus of a thoroughly sound kind, able to challenge any honest and reasonable criticism.

Though during the recess persistent efforts have been made to combine the Maori tribes in a league against further sales of land, my Advisers are glad to be able to assure you that the attempt has failed. Indeed, signatures to deeds of sale are being affixed in numbers, and the work of the acquisition by the State of Native land is in no danger of being arrested. From causes which will be made known to you, the work of surveying the territory of the Tuhoe Tribe was some months ago suddenly interrupted. A display of armed force, and negotiations conducted for the Government by the member of the Executive representing the Native race, quickly led to a peaceful understanding. But my Advisers, deeming it best to guard against any further disturbance or obstruction in that part of the colony, have decided to insure, by pushing roads through the length and breadth of the Urewera country, that in future it shall lie at peace and open to all.

The inability of the Midland Railway Company to complete its contract has long been notorious. Three years ago the company's New Zealand representatives frankly admitted this inability. Though valuable concessions were more than once granted, the company had twice subsequently to ask Parliament to modify the contract in order to prevent the collapse of the undertaking. The second application was decisively refused. Though the time for the contract's completion expired in January last, only about one-fifth of the moneys required for the line's construction have yet been laid out, and for months past little or no work has been done. The arbitration demanded by the company was postponed by the arbitrators until next year. The inexcusable delay by the company in completing its work, and the consequent locking-up of five millions of acres of Crown lands, impelled my Advisers to take possession of both the completed and incomplete portions of the line. This step was taken in accordance with law, and under the best advice to be obtained. The opened portion of the Midland Railway is now being worked by the Government, and authority will be asked to extend it. The cost of such extension the company will be requested to refund.

The visit of the Colonial Treasurer to London has been followed by much direct advantage to the colony. At the Postal Conference at Hobart new cable rates were fixed, under which New Zealand will save £3,000 a year. In London the Treasurer has obtained for the colony amended terms with the Bank of England, whereby the colony will benefit to the extent of £3,000 per annum. Above all, New Zealand has led the way in successfully floating a 3-per-cent. loan in the English money-market, thereby strengthening her public credit and insuring the success of the scheme for giving financial aid under the Advances to Settlers Act. Many of our settlers have alleged that their applications for loans have not received that consideration which their merits demanded. The responsibility, however, of administering the law rests with the Board, and the circumstances complained of are beyond the control of my Ministers. This matter will, I trust, receive your careful consideration.

With the view of opening fresh markets for our products, my Ministers have provisionally arranged reciprocal treaties with Canada and South Australia. These agreements will be submitted to you, and you will be asked to ratify them. There will also be laid before you the report of the delegate who last year represented this colony at the Ottawa Conference—a meeting memorable for the action of the Imperial Government in despatching to the gathering the Earl of Jersey on behalf of the mother-country. The report above mentioned deals with proposals as to the establishment of a mail-service by way of Vancouver, and the laying of an ocean cable across the Pacific to connect New Zealand with British North America.

The world-wide problem of providing work for the workless has once more been a cause of anxiety. During the recess one of my Ministers visited and inspected a number of the village settlements and labour colonies in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia. His report has led to the trial of an important experiment in combining settlement with the employment of

labour. Further, an experienced officer has been despatched to Australia to make a more elaborate survey of the village settlements there. On his return his report will be laid before you.

The settlement of the waste lands of the Crown under the general land-laws of the colony has continued to go on satisfactorily during the past year.

The extension of dairy-farming in so many parts of the colony makes it a source of satisfaction that the systematic grading and cool-storage of dairy produce are now being carried on by the Department of Agriculture with the best results.

Fully alive to the paramount necessity for stimulating trade both in timber and frozen meat, my Ministers have endeavoured to aid the export of the former by guaranteeing half the freight of cargoes, and propose to call together a Conference in Wellington to discuss steps for improving the distribution of our meat in Great Britain.

The measures recommended in the report on the colony's defences are being steadily carried on. The advice of last year's Military Conference is being acted on, and before next year the whole of our forces will be armed with the Martini-Henry rifle. The requisite ammunition will henceforth be manufactured within New Zealand.

The time has, in my opinion, arrived for increasing the number of my Ministers. The growth of population, the advance of settlement, and the extension of the functions of the State have so added to the duties of my Advisers as to make this change needful in the best interests of the colony.

GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

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

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

For the third year in succession you will be asked to pass a Bill extending to local bodies the right of levying rates upon land-values. By it such bodies will be allowed to apply the principle upon which direct taxation has for years been assessed by the Government.

A Fair Rent Bill will be introduced, and also a measure to effect needful amendments in the Land for Settlements Act. You will be asked to deal with the electoral law, and to assent to a change designed to prevent too frequent and inconvenient changes of the boundaries of electorates.

Public opinion demands that the difficult problems of local-government and charitable-aid reform should be faced, and, if possible, solved without further delay. A measure, which it is hoped will reduce the number of our too numerous Local Councils, while at the same time concentrating their functions and strengthening their financial position, will shortly be laid before you.

I trust that you will this session see your way to readjust the Customs tariff. For the purpose of collecting information of service to Parliament and the Government in dealing with this complicated matter, I appointed a Royal Commission consisting of well-known gentlemen of public experience. An exhaustive report prepared by the Commissioners will be submitted to you.

Full and fair opportunity will be afforded you for discussing the vexed and interesting question of licensing reform.

Bills have been prepared designed to check excessive rates of usury, and to protect and preserve for the families of working settlers the homes which they have made their own.

Measures are ready for your consideration dealing with the relations of masters and apprentices, with public tenders and contracts, and with the restriction of the influx of race-aliens and certain persons. You will be invited to pass Bills dealing with State-school teachers and matters connected with secondary education, and also to amend the law concerning juries.

These proposals I commend to your attention. I earnestly assure you of my wish to aid your exertions for the good of the colony. I pray that your labours may, with God's blessing, tend to promote the welfare and prosperity of the people of New Zealand.

