

THE
NEW ZEALAND GAZETTE
 EXTRAORDINARY.

Published by Authority.

WELLINGTON, FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 1900.

THE First Session of the Fourteenth 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 is with sincere pleasure that I again meet you in Parliament assembled. The favourable impression I formed of your colony in the past is fully borne out by the improved condition and well-being of the people, evidence of which I have witnessed with pleasure, and my belief in its large resources grows stronger from further and more intimate knowledge.

During the recess I have visited many parts of the colony, and have noticed with gratification the general prosperity which obtains amongst all classes. Those engaged in pastoral and agricultural pursuits are prospering, industries flourish, labour is plentiful and better paid than in other parts of the world, and the mining industry has developed in a marked degree.

The attempt made on the life of the Prince of Wales caused a shock throughout the civilised world. The people of New Zealand heartily rejoiced at the escape of His Royal Highness, and on their behalf I forwarded the heartfelt congratulations of the colony, in reply to which a gracious acknowledgment was received.

During the recess there have been changes in the Ministry, the Honourable Mr. Cadman having, through ill-health, resigned the several portfolios held by him, to take a well-earned rest from labours which have been for the good of the colony. He has been called to the Legislative Council, and retains his seat in the Executive Council.

The Honourable Mr. Thompson has also retired from the Ministry, and I have called to my assistance the Honourable J. G. Ward and the Honourable James McGowan.

The loyal devotion and affection of the people of New Zealand to Her Gracious Majesty and their determination to uphold the supremacy of the Empire have been demonstrated in a manner that has evoked the commendation and admiration of all well-wishers of the British nation. The Parliament

of New Zealand was the first to offer assistance in the emergency of the Empire that had arisen in South Africa; and that a contingent from our shores should be the first to land at the seat of war is a matter for proud recollection.

In view of the continued necessities of the campaign, this colony has, in addition, sent four other contingents to do battle in South Africa for justice and freedom, on behalf of those of our kindred who were denied liberty and who suffered oppression, and if need be is quite prepared to send more and larger contingents to follow.

By their spontaneous yet deliberate and determined action, the people of this colony have, of their own volition, assumed a responsibility in regard to the Empire, far-reaching in effect and self-sacrificing and patriotic in its nature.

It is gratifying to know that our action and the motives inspiring it have been fully appreciated by our kinsmen across the seas.

The arming, equipping, and sending free of cost to either the Imperial Government or the Government of this colony, of one contingent, and the sending of another on similar conditions with the exception of the cost of transport, are matters for which the colony has every reason to feel proud, and demonstrate a patriotism which is lasting, solid, and sincere.

The New Zealand soldiers in South Africa have acquitted themselves admirably, and have well maintained the traditions of our nation, and proved that climatic changes and distance from the Mother-country have in no way damped the military ardour, curtailed the powers of endurance, or otherwise deteriorated the race. Our soldiers fighting on the veldt in South Africa have done our colony credit, and have won the commendation of the distinguished Commander-in-Chief and of the able generals under him, and are entitled to our gratitude, as they have won our admiration.

The call of the Empire to her sons has been cheerfully responded to, but not without suffering, for in the struggle many valuable lives have been lost, and ere the end comes others, no doubt, will be sacrificed. I feel sure that you will join with me in offering to the bereaved relatives our heartfelt sympathy.

Much to their disappointment, it was not found possible to accept the offer made by the Maori people to furnish a contingent. Their devotion to the Queen, however, found expression in the generous contributions which were made to the several patriotic funds.

The surrender to Germany of British rights in Samoa has caused considerable disappointment, but I hope countervailing advantages to Great Britain have been secured by the cession of certain valuable rights in other islands. I feel satisfied that the matter was well considered, and that those upon whom the responsibility rests deemed the arrangement to be in the best interests of the Empire.

My Advisers consider it to be of the first importance to the Empire and this colony that British interests in the islands of the Pacific should be definitely conserved, and, in respect to several of the islands, that, with the concurrence of the inhabitants, annexation should, where possible, take place. With a view of removing difficulties and providing satisfactory administration, the extension of the boundaries of this colony may be found necessary, and, if so, the people of New Zealand may be required to assume the increased responsibility.

The prospect of the early federation of the Australian Colonies is a matter of great interest to New Zealand; and, although my Advisers deem it not desirable or opportune for us to federate at the present time, we entertain no unfriendly feeling towards the natural aspirations of our Australian neighbours. Looking to the future, as an outlying State directly interested, representations were made to the Secretary of State on the subject.

In the stress of a terrible famine the Viceroy of India appealed to this country, as well as to other portions of the Empire, for help on behalf of the millions of human beings, our fellow-subjects, famine-stricken and helpless in that part of the Empire; and after consulting members of Parliament my Ministers decided that substantial aid from the colony should be forwarded.

A conflagration exceptionally widespread in its devastating effects befell the City of Ottawa, and thousands of people were left homeless and destitute. My

Advisers, after ascertaining the wishes of members of Parliament, contributed substantial assistance on behalf of the colony. Grateful thanks from Canada came in return.

MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

The estimates of the year will be laid before you, and they have been prepared with due regard to economy and the necessities of the public service. In respect to the Defence Forces, Harbour Defences, the cost of sending and maintaining the Contingents, and generally placing our defences on a safer and more satisfactory footing, as you will naturally have concluded, a largely increased provision will have to be made.

The increasing traffic on our railways demands that a proportionate provision on the estimates should be made to meet the growing reproductive expenditure. Inasmuch as moneys intelligently expended on the railways is more than compensated for by increased revenue, my Advisers find themselves in a position to grant large concessions in respect of passenger-fares and freights. It will be pleasing to you to know that we have a steadily increasing revenue, ample to meet present requirements, notwithstanding the extra calls made upon it.

During the present period of universal prosperity the opportunity is afforded of calmly and equitably considering the incidence of taxation. It is undoubted that the great buoyancy of trade has added largely to the revenues raised by indirect taxation. I trust you may at no distant date consider the incidence of indirect taxation, with a view of reducing Customs duties levied on the necessaries of life.

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

That the bubonic plague exists in several of the Australian Colonies is unfortunately true, and the strenuous efforts made to prevent its appearance in New Zealand, and to minimise its dire effects should it appear here, will, I feel sure, receive your warmest commendation. Nothing has been spared that science or common-sense could suggest to prevent its spread to this colony, and, so far, with success. The laws, however, respecting public health are defective, and do not give the necessary power to preserve the health of the people, or to grapple with a scourge like the one which threatens us. Commissioners, both European and Native, have been appointed in the several districts of the colony. The information gained by them and the reports that they furnish will be of service. Legislation in respect to the public health will be submitted.

The successful results of the policy of securing the acquisition of lands for close settlement, and the placing of the people thereon, fully warrant a continued and vigorous development of the system. Close settlement has been highly beneficial, and the increased products thereby obtained have swelled our exports in a large degree, and helped to bring about the general prosperity now existing.

The cheap money lent to settlers under the Advances to Settlers Act has materially helped to secure a reasonable rate of interest, and has been of great assistance, particularly to leasehold tenants of the Crown. The most sanguine expectations of my Advisers have been realised; and the success that has attended the operation of this law fully warrants further attention to the question. The requirements of the country necessitate that further moneys shall be raised for this purpose.

Pensions to the deserving aged have proved to be a great boon to many old colonists requiring assistance. Circumstances which could not, in the first instance, have been foreseen, have caused a somewhat larger expenditure than was anticipated; but, notwithstanding this, the strain has not proved too great for our resources, and the continuation of this law is considered by my Advisers to be in the best interests of humanity.

It will be gratifying to you to know that the long-standing dispute with the Midland Railway Company has at last been settled. The case was decided in

the colony's favour by the Supreme Court; it was then taken to the Court of Appeal, which also decided in the colony's favour. The debenture-holders then took the case to the Privy Council, which has decided that the course taken by the colony was legal, and within the terms of the contract. It will thus be seen that the Arbitration Court, the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, and the Privy Council have all affirmed that the action of the Government throughout has been within the law, and that neither the company nor the debenture-holders have, under the circumstances, any legal ground for complaint. I understand that Parliament will be petitioned, and that consideration for the debenture-holders will be asked for. In consequence of the delay that has taken place settlement of the land has been retarded. An amendment of the Land Act will be required, so that justice may be done to occupiers of land within the Midland area.

As the outcome of the popular will the duties of the State have been considerably enlarged. The increased administrative work owing to growth of population and business and increased State departments has unduly taxed the energies of Ministers to such an extent as to warrant your attention and consideration.

The time is opportune to deal with overcrowding in our cities, and, by legislation generally, to deal with this important part of our daily life on modern and progressive lines.

The commerce of the colony, and improved connections by means of steamers with the markets of the world, are matters of the greatest importance, and my Advisers are of opinion that every effort should be made to open up new markets for our produce, and to regulate established markets on equitably framed conditions.

The Chambers of Commerce, if placed on a satisfactory footing, by being made truly representative of the commerce of our country, should be of more real benefit to the community than they are at present. To enable this to be done, proposals will be placed before you.

The experience of the past few years points to the necessity for consolidating and amending our labour laws. Owing to lapse of time and altered conditions, other laws require revision, amendment, and consolidation. Proposals will be made dealing with domestic and other reforms.

The lessons taught by the war in South Africa have not been lost upon my Ministers, and heavy liabilities have been incurred by increasing the number of Volunteer corps, and obtaining arms and munitions of war.

In view of late developments, and to meet the altered conditions, the laws relating to the Defence Force require revision, and necessary amendments will be submitted.

The establishment of a fully equipped reserve force for Imperial and colonial purposes, within prescribed limits, and on terms to be arranged between the Imperial authorities and this colony, is worthy of your consideration.

The present system of local government is not satisfactory. Reduction in the number of local authorities, greater power, and assured finance are essential; and, though the matter is one that requires much attention, time, and thought, I hope that you will not shrink from the task of placing local government on a more satisfactory basis.

Your attention will be required in respect to the carriage of our mails *via* San Francisco, and also mails for the Pacific Islands and elsewhere. In connection with extended and improved mail-services the interchange of products and the development of trade generally should form an important factor.

The improvement in the breeding of horses and cattle, the inspection of meat, slaughtering of sheep and cattle, and grading of products are subjects worthy of consideration.

In the interests of the educational system of the colony, proposals will be submitted dealing with teachers' salaries. You will also be invited to consider legislation for granting further aid to technical education, in the interest of the youth of both races; also to consider several necessary amendments and consolidations of the laws affecting labour, regulating the hours thereof, and providing for compensation for accidents.

I am pleased to be able to state that mining in all its branches maintains its position amongst the industries of the colony, the yield of gold for the year 1899 being the highest for the past twenty-six years, while the output from the coal-mines shows a steady increase. How best to further develop our coal measures, and insure an increased output at reasonable cost to consumers, will, I hope, not be overlooked.

Our leading quartz-mines continue to yield satisfactory returns, while the impetus given to alluvial mining by the improvements made in the machinery and appliances for the recovery of gold from the river-beds and flats of the Middle Island has been the means of affording employment to a large number of men.

As extensive areas of agricultural land in the Middle Island are expected to prove payably auriferous, the question of the best means to be adopted for extracting the gold in such manner as not to leave these areas thereafter unfit for agricultural purposes is one requiring careful attention.

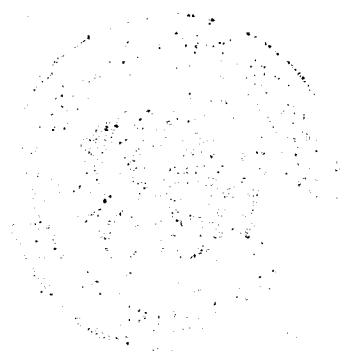
My Ministers recognise the necessity for a more vigorous prosecution of railway-construction, especially between centres of population, and proposals regarding this important matter will be placed before you.

The establishment of a Pacific cable has also engaged the attention of my Advisers, and no effort has been, or will be, spared to undertake the colony's share of its responsibility in connection with this Imperial work.

During the recess, several large and representative meetings have been held by the Natives, and from them, through their chiefs, every assurance of loyalty and desire for the good of both races has been made to me.

Measures affecting the Native race, and dealing with their lands, will be laid before you.

I commend these several matters to your serious consideration and attention, and trust that the guidance and blessing of the Almighty may enable your labours to be fraught with good to the people of our colony and the great Empire to which we belong.



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