THE

NEW ZEALAND GAZETTE

EXTRAORDINARY.

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WELLINGTON, TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 1904.

THE Second Session of the Fifteenth 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,—

His Most Gracious Majesty having appointed me his Representative in New Zealand, I am delighted, immediately after my arrival, to meet you in Parliament assembled.

The continued good health of His Majesty the King will be to you and to all his loyal subjects in New Zealand a matter for sincere congratulation.

The very warm and enthusiastic welcome accorded me upon my first landing on your shores was a striking evidence of New Zealand's loyalty and devotion to the Throne, and I personally deeply appreciated the cordial words of welcome and encouragement extended to me as His Majesty's Representative.

I have not as yet had an opportunity of making myself acquainted with the colony, its people, and resources, but I am eagerly looking forward to making extended visits throughout your beautiful and most interesting land.

My predecessor on first addressing you said that, with careful administration and reasonable opportunities, the colony had a great future before it. These words were prophetic, and have been fully realised. It will ever be my pleasure strenuously to assist in giving effect to your highest aspirations and ideals, and to the maintenance and the continuance of the prosperity now existing.

During the reception, on the day of my arrival, I noticed with pleasure what a fine body of men you possessed in your Permanent Force and Volunteers. The smart and military bearing of your school cadets particularly delighted me. I consider this movement well designed and far-reaching in its effects. If the martial spirit thus ingrained in the boy is subsequently fostered and encouraged in the young man, the word "conscription," so repugnant to a free people, may well be considered as removed from the vocabulary of the colony.

The war in the Far East has not been without its lessons. Distance from the western countries gave security, but the developments in Eastern Asia should not be disregarded. Though trouble in the near future is very improbable, still it is our duty to be prepared for every emergency.

The scheme respecting naval defence contained in the first proposals submitted by the Lords of the Admiralty to the Prime Ministers of the Australian Commonwealth and New Zealand in London was at that time considered necessary; but, on grounds of economy, other proposals, providing for a weaker squadron, were adopted. It is now worthy of consideration whether the original scheme should not be reverted to, thus again augmenting the subsidy payable; and, if so, provision should be made for the increased expenditure entailed.

I am pleased to understand from my Ministers that in respect to ammunition and the munitions of war the colony is better supplied than at any time during its history.

As you are aware, the Naval Agreement is in force, and the first experience of recruiting has exceeded expectations, especially in regard to the class of men offering for the Naval Reserve and for the drill-ships. The result will be that in a few years you will have a well-trained body of men ready and efficient to man the war-vessels, or to meet any emergency that may arise.

It was intimated to the Imperial Government that it would be pleasing to the people of this colony if one of the war-ships on the Australian Station should be placed at our disposal for use as a training-ship when withdrawn from commission. I am happy to say that the gunboat "Sparrow" has been granted for the purpose, and may be expected in the colony at any time. Immediately on arrival she will be prepared for the purpose for which she is intended—namely, the training of youths in seamanship. When they have received the requisite training, they will be available for the cruisers and warships on the Australian Station and for the mercantile marine. The dearth of British-bred seamen in the colony will by this means, to some extent at least, be provided for.

In accordance with a general desire, and with a view of encouraging rifle shooting, a team of marksmen under the command of Colonel Collins was selected, and proceeded to England to represent the colony at the Bisley meeting. The best possible selection was made, and there is every prospect of their acquitting themselves with credit to the colony.

My Ministers are of the opinion that it would be pleasing to the people of this colony, and especially to the officers and men who served under him in South Africa, and to the Defence Force generally, again to invite Field Marshal Earl Roberts, K.P., G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., V.C., to visit New Zealand, and to be the guest of the colony. Your concurrence will be invited.

You will be pleased to learn that there is a probability of the troubles existing in the New Hebrides being removed, the Governments of France and Great Britain having appointed a Commission to inquire into the disputed land claims and grievances existing. The correspondence and papers relating thereto will no doubt be laid before you in due course.

Some time ago my Ministers, on behalf of the colony, made a protest to the Secretary of State for the Colonies against the introduction of Chinese to work the Rand mines in the Transvaal. The correspondence on the subject will be placed before you, and an opportunity will be afforded to discuss the question.

As you are aware, Canada is represented in London by a High Commissioner, and power is also given by the Commonwealth of Australia for the institution of a similar office in London. My Ministers are of opinion that it would lend importance to the position if legislation to give power to appoint a High Commissioner for this colony were provided. This matter will be submitted for your consideration.

My responsible Advisers are of the opinion that the time is fast approaching when an alteration should be made in regard to the constitution of the Legislative Council.

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,—

It is with profound regret I learn that since last session your number has been reduced by the death of the Honourable William Campbell Walker, C.M.G., who for many years was a Minister of the Crown, and who at the time of his death was your esteemed Speaker. I deeply regret also the death of the Honourable Henare Tomoana. The noble part he took in the troublesome days of the past, and his services otherwise to the colony, especially to the Maori race whom he so worthily represented, will ever entitle him to be held in respectful memory.

I have appointed the Honourable Sir George Maurice O'Rorke, Knight, to be a member of your honourable Council.

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

I am able to congratulate you on the stability and the sustained improvement in the public finances of the colony, which are now, my Advisers inform me, in as strong and healthy a condition as they have been at any time during the last twenty-five years.

Notwithstanding the unprecedented surplus of last year, the Estimates have been framed with strict regard to economy, it being always prudent, even in the midst of prosperity, not to forget that this prosperity may not last for ever.

Comparative statements will be submitted to you showing that the increase in expenditure has resulted largely from the inauguration of new departments. Many of these are self-supporting, and any increased cost is counterbalanced by the increased and expanding revenue.

Our financial obligations, notwithstanding the tightness of the London money market, have been met on terms satisfactory alike to the colony and to the public creditor, and I am happy to state that there is no necessity for increasing the burdens of the people.

My Advisers consider that the time has arrived when the question of increasing the salaries of the Judges of the Supreme Court should be taken into consideration.

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

An agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company has been entered into tentatively, which my Advisers deemed necessary to protest against, as being detrimental to the interests of the Pacific Cable. Under the circumstances, it has been decided to hold a Conference of those interested, with a view to arriving at a satisfactory settlement of the difficulty, and so conserve the rights of the "all-red" cable. The Conference is about to sit in London, and Sir Sandford Fleming has been appointed to represent the colony thereat. The decisions arrived at by the Conference will be duly placed before you.

I am happy to say that a contract has been entered into with the Federal Steamship Company for a West of England service with New Zealand, the details and conditions of which will be laid before you in due course. This service provides for a long-felt want, affording greater facility for the transit of our principal products to Liverpool, Cardiff, and Glasgow, and, while the rates for carriage are materially reduced, no monetary payment is required from the colony. Already the freights offering far exceed anticipations. There is a probability of the service extending to Manchester, thus enabling our producers to have direct trade connection with the millions of the industrial classes in the Mother-country.

As you are no doubt aware, a General Manager has been appointed for the State Fire Insurance Department, and every effort is being made to commence business on safe and practical lines. There have been many difficulties to surmount; but there is every prospect of this Department realising the expectations prevailing at the time the Act was passed last year. Some little time ago

a Conference was held, at which representatives of fire-insurance companies doing business in the colony were present, and my Ministers advise me that a course of action inimical to the State Fire Insurance Department was decided upon. This situation has been considered and will be met satisfactorily. There is, however, the pleasing feature that one of the objects Parliament had in view has already been achieved—namely, the reduction of the rate of fire-insurance premiums previously existing in some parts of the colony.

A matter of some moment which demands your earnest attention is the inspection of public and private hospitals, nursing homes, and homes such as the Costley Home in Auckland. Government Inspectors may inspect and report, but there is no legal authority to support the enforcement of their suggested reforms in administration. You will be asked to legislate in this matter.

The heavy infant mortality, with the pain and sorrow entailed thereby, impels my Ministers to urge the introduction of remedial measures. The inadequate provision for the nursing of the sick, especially of the poor of the colony, demands attention, whilst the establishment of foundling and maternity homes is worthy of consideration.

In older countries better provision in these matters is made by the kindly actions of philanthropists; but in New Zealand, where conditions differ so widely, my Ministers consider it not out of place to help to bring about a better state of affairs in this respect. The municipal, hospital, and local institutions will be made use of as far as possible.

The present system of local government is not satisfactory. Reduction in the number of the local authorities, greater power, and assured finance are essential. The matter is one which requires much attention, time, and thought, and my Ministers hope ere long that local government may be placed on a more satisfactory basis.

My Ministers are of the opinion that it is detrimental to the best interests of the colony that monopolies, more especially in respect to food-supplies or tobacco, should exist; and they consider it is the duty of Parliament to pass such legislation either to regulate the operation of, or prevent, trusts and combines existing to the disadvantage of the people. You will be asked to legislate upon this matter.

The prices realised for our staple products are on the whole satisfactory. The profits on dairying are not so great as they were a year ago. With greater care in the selection of stock, due regard to pasture and winter feed, the previous rate of profit with the present prices should be obtained. The prices of wool, sheep, and lambs are satisfactory.

The slight fall in the price of butter and grain has given some concern to those particularly and directly interested, but my Ministers are of the opinion that the general prospects of the colony were never brighter.

Last year's imports and exports were a record for the colony. The exports exceeded the imports by a satisfactory amount. The trade, industries, and commerce of the colony are flourishing, and the increased receipts from Customs and railways indicate an enlarged spending-power and continued prosperity.

The settlement of people upon the lands of the colony under favourable conditions is of vital importance. My Ministers inform me that the setting-up of a Royal Commission is necessary for the purpose of inquiry into the working of the present land laws and regulations; the constitution of Land Boards and their administration particularly affecting Crown tenants; the question of freehold and leasehold generally; the nature of the difficulties said to exist as to State tenants obtaining advances on their interests; and how a material departure from existing laws would affect the colony. Such Commission will be advised accordingly.

The coal- and gold-mining operations for the year have been very satisfactory. The yield of gold was the greatest that has obtained for the last thirty years, and the outlook for this year is of a very cheery nature. With larger dredges and stronger machinery, the output from the gold-dredges has improved. The yield of gold at Waihi continues to increase, and the discovery of payable quartz at lower levels is a matter for congratulation. The result of the boring-operations at the Thames has given renewed hopes.

The output of coal last year was phenomenal, yet the supply was not sufficient to meet the demand. Invitations for supplies for railway purposes in many cases met with no response. Owing to your far-sightedness in providing for the establishment of the State Coal-mines, there will be more than sufficient coal to meet the requirements of the State. The coal from the Seddonville Mine, though soft, has proved to be excellent for steaming purposes. A trial test has been made by the Admiralty of the coal from the State mine at Coal Creek. The results of the trial and the details in connection with the State coal-mines will be submitted to you in due course.

The denudation of your forests and the large export of timber from your colony are matters of grave concern, and, with the continually increasing output and export, before many years are passed New Zealand will be largely importing timber from other countries. Every effort should be made wherever timbered lands are thrown open for settlement to prevent valuable timber being destroyed by fire. Economy and care in respect to your forests are necessary; tree-planting and well-equipped forestry are essential.

Bills dealing with the control and sale of alcohol, with electoral reform, and with amendments of the Regulation of Local Elections Act, will be placed before you.

You will be asked to legislate, among other things, respecting the regulation of the hours of those engaged in shops and offices. Measures respecting further railway authorisation, referendum, teachers' superannuation, trade monopolies, labour, fire brigades, evidence, harbours, Civil Service classification, the rating of Native lands, Hospitals and Charitable Institutions, will be submitted.

The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Acts compilation, the Education Acts compilation, and the Marriage Acts compilation, as ordered under "The Statutes Compilation Act, 1892," will be submitted, and you will be asked to legislate accordingly.

I feel satisfied that, having due regard to the responsibility cast upon you, you will apply yourselves diligently to the business of the country; that you will strenuously endeavour to pass laws that are necessary, and direct such administration as will promote the continued happiness and well-being of the people of this fair colony.

In declaring Parliament open, I fervently invoke the guidance of our Divine Master upon your proceedings, trusting that the results of your deliberations will be to your credit, for the material welfare of New Zealand, and to the glory and solidarity of the British Empire.

By Authority: JOHN MACKAY, Government Printer, Wellington.