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THE Fourth Session of the Sixteenth 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,—

I have much pleasure in again meeting you in Parliament assembled.

In accordance with the practice of my predecessors and for the purpose of widening my acquaintance with the people and lands of the Dominion, I have during the past twelve months visited various parts of the country, and everywhere on these journeys I was profoundly impressed by the sturdy energy, loyalty, and material comfort of our people.

Since I last met you New Zealand has maintained her high standard of healthy prosperity, and although the prices of some of our chief commodities have recently suffered depression there is a hopeful prospect of their early recovery. The general outlook for our producers and those engaged in trade and commerce is encouraging, and given due energy and prudence there appears no reason to apprehend that the increase in our material wealth and the widespread comfort of our people is likely to decline.

It is fitting that I should mention the loss which Great Britain has suffered in the death of its Prime Minister, the late Right Honourable Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, whose high character and long public service endeared him to our nation, and now secures for him a lasting place in the memory of the British people.

During the last twelve months death has removed the Honourable William Kelly, of the Legislative Council, and Mr. James Bennet, of the House of Representatives, gentlemen who earned for themselves the esteem and respect of both branches of the Legislature.

On the 26th September last New Zealand passed from the status of a colony to the higher plane of Dominion, and I take this the first oppor-

tunity I have had to congratulate you in Parliament assembled upon the high dignity His Majesty has thereby conferred on this progressive country, and to express the hope and belief that the change may not only secure for us a worthier place in the world's esteem, but also by increasing our national self-respect help to stimulate the higher ideals of our own people.

Consequent on strong representations made by my Prime Minister when in London, New Zealand has now been placed in the same position as the Dominion of Canada with respect to the important constitutional question of the reservation of Bills for the Royal assent.

I have been notified that early in August warships of the United States of America will visit New Zealand. The event is historical, for it will be the first visit of a fleet of that great nation which has sprung from our own hardy race — a nation speaking our tongue, sharing not only our literature and our noblest traditions, but also our aspirations and ideals. Preparations for a suitable welcome are now well in hand, and it is hoped that the visit, in addition to its national importance, will be made a pleasant and memorable one to the officers and men of this detachment of the American navy.

Another event connected with the Northern Continent of America takes place in July next, when Canada will celebrate her Tercentenary at Quebec. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales will represent His Majesty the King on this important and historic occasion, which is one of deep interest to all parts of our Empire. My Prime Minister was invited by the Government of Canada to be present as representing New Zealand, but owing to Parliament being in session he will be unable to leave his public duties, and, at the suggestion of my Advisers, my predecessor, the Right Hon. the Earl of Ranfurly, was asked and has kindly agreed to attend in his stead. It is felt that New Zealand is fortunate in having such a representative who combines with other qualifications a wide knowledge of and a deep love for this country and its people.

An Exhibition of more than industrial importance has been recently opened in London by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and I am pleased to say that New Zealand products are well represented. The Franco-British Exhibition has for us an international significance, in that it affords a striking testimony of the relations of amity existing between Great Britain and France, as well as at the same time contributing to the world's peace.

The term of office of the High Commissioner for New Zealand having expired on the 14th June instant, the Honourable William Pember Reeves was reappointed for a further term.

An unusual period of dry weather during last midsummer caused serious loss to farmers and settlers throughout New Zealand by reason of bush and other fires, which destroyed large areas of crop and forest, and in some cases stock, homesteads, and other buildings. To relieve the loss which fell crushingly upon these farmers and settlers, grass-seed was furnished by my Advisers in proper cases and upon such terms as relieved the sufferers.

Early on the morning of the 11th December last New Zealand suffered a national loss in the destruction by fire of the Parliament Buildings. Happily, the library and its contents escaped injury, but many valuable records and other papers were destroyed. A threefold loss falls upon us by the destruction of these buildings, for not only were they the council-halls of our Legislature and one of our chief archives, but they were closely connected with the history and progress of this country, and with the lives and achievements of honoured statesmen of the past. Indeed, as archives and as a memorial the loss of Parliament Buildings is irreparable. Temporary accommodation for you is provided in this House, and you will be asked to consider at an early date proposals which my Advisers will bring before you for suitable permanent Houses of Parliament.

It is recognised that our present mail-service to and from Great Britain and Europe is unsatisfactory, and efforts have been continuously made by my Prime Minister to secure the co-operation of Great Britain and her oversea dominions to the end that a fast and entirely British line of mail-steamers should be provided for these postal services of Great Britain, Canada, Australia,

and New Zealand. These efforts are still being maintained, and my Advisers are hopeful of their ultimate success.

This year a great work culminates in the completion of the labours of the Reprint of Statutes Commission, and during this session of Parliament a consolidation in five volumes of the general public statutes, now contained in some fifty-five volumes, will be introduced for the purpose of being passed into law.

This country has exceedingly rich national endowments of water-power, and the expediency has been impressed on my Advisers of permitting portions of this water-power to be employed for private enterprise under strict and proper safeguards in the public interest. Proposals to this end will be shortly laid before you in the form of enabling legislation.

My Advisers feel that the time has arrived to bring this country abreast of those which now secure a more perfect majority representation by the system of a second election, and a Bill will be introduced providing for such a system.

Since I last met you difficulties have been experienced in the industrial world, and to meet them my Advisers will submit legislation which it is hoped will improve the industrial condition of our people and promote friendlier relations between employer and employed.

You will be pleased to know that the land legislation of last session promises success. Several large estates have been acquired, and in disposing of them for settlement the popularity of the renewable-lease system has been shown by the fact that the demand for sections has largely exceeded the supply.

It is gratifying to find that the mining industry, which is second in importance only to our farming and pastoral industries, is thriving and progressing with steady strides. Legislation facilitating the operation of some minor provisions of the Mining Acts will be introduced, and clearer expression will be given to the intention of Parliament with regard to what is known as the "bank-to-bank" clause of the Coal-mines Act.

The Native Land Commissioners, His Honour the Chief Justice and Mr. A. T. Ngata, M.P., have been carrying on the work of their Commission with unflinching diligence. They have held sittings in all the different localities in which areas of land calling for their investigation are situated, and have with great patience given the Native owners the fullest opportunity of being heard and of expressing their objections or consent to those methods of dealing with their lands which have been discussed or suggested by the Commission. The happy result has been secured that a very large area of land has been recommended by the Commission for European settlement, while retaining for the Native owners such areas as are desirable for their use and occupation. All this work has been done with the harmonious co-operation of the Native owners themselves. The necessary work of surveys and other preliminaries in the opening of such land for settlement is being pushed on vigorously. It is hoped that the Commission will be able to complete its labours very early next year. The present law with respect to Native townships such as Taumarunui, Te Kuiti, and other centres has been found to be unsatisfactory to Europeans, and the disabilities arising from this law will be removed.

The departure of the steamship "Nimrod" for the purpose of the scientific exploration of the Antarctic regions has created much interest throughout New Zealand, and the result of these explorations is awaited with hopefulness and interest.

It is gratifying to have the assurance of my Advisers that the great work of the construction of the North Island Main Trunk Railway will be completed within a few months, and that thereby the two principal cities of Wellington and Auckland will be directly connected by rail.

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

My Advisers feel that this country has now reached a stage at which it should institute a scheme of national annuities available for all classes of the community. The complexity of this question has caused my Advisers much earnest consideration, and a scheme has been devised which it is hoped will secure general approval, and which will be laid before you in the form of an

Annuities Bill. Proposals will also be submitted providing for superannuation for employees of local public bodies, tramway, gas, and electric light companies.

Difficulties and objections in connection with our present method of public audit have induced my Advisers to determine upon a change in the system, and amendments of the law will therefore be proposed bringing the public audit of this country into closer harmony with the system which prevails in Great Britain and most of the oversea dominions.

During last session two Acts were passed providing schemes for classification and superannuation of the officers of the public service. The necessary preliminary work of bringing these Acts into operation has been pushed on diligently, and they promise eminently satisfactory results. Some minor machinery defects will be met by an amendment which will be laid before you.

The estimates of the revenue and expenditure for the year have been compiled with due care, having regard to both economy and efficiency, and will shortly be placed before you for your consideration. The accounts disclose, as in recent years, the gratifying result of a substantial surplus on the year's transactions, and I am happy to say that, so far, this year's receipts are in every way satisfactory.

My Advisers have been increasingly impressed by the needs of settlers in the less accessible localities of the Dominion. These settlers courageously endure many hardships, and in view of the beneficial result of their labour to the whole community my Advisers are of opinion that the State should extend a strong helping hand to them in such directions as are prudent. To this end you will be asked to make a special and liberal provision for the construction of roads, telephones, and such other conveniences as will assist them in their work of settling and improving our outpost lands, and relieve as far as possible the hardships incident to their lives. The success of closer settlement justifies the vigorous promotion of that policy, and among the cardinal objects of my Advisers will be the further extension of closer settlement and the early completion of the main lines of railways now in hand.

After mature consideration my Advisers have decided to increase the contribution paid by this Dominion to the British Navy, as they are confident that the truest interests of the people of New Zealand will be best served by having a powerful navy under the independent control of those responsible for directing it in time of peace or war. You will be asked to make provision accordingly. ■

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

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My Advisers have asked the British Government for a larger vessel than the "Amokura" so as to train up to a thousand young men at a time. A proportion of the men thus trained would then be available for manning His Majesty's ships in New Zealand waters. It is also contemplated that the training of young men for the mercantile marine should be undertaken on the New Zealand training-ship. The advantage of this proposal is that in time of need those who are engaged in this occupation will be sufficiently trained to man His Majesty's ships if required.

Steady progress has taken place during the past year in the agricultural development of the country. My Advisers have constantly kept in view the necessity for up-to-date methods in farming operations and the application of science to agricultural pursuits. The various experimental stations are enlisting the sympathies of farmers throughout the North Island, and the extension of the system to the South Island is in contemplation. Satisfactory progress has been made in the direction of the establishment of a dairy school at Palmerston North and of a veterinary school at Dunedin.

My Advisers are of opinion that, with the near approach of the completion of the North Island Main Trunk Railway, the time has arrived for the State to acquire the Manawatu Railway line, and the proper preliminary legal steps have already been taken to that end. Legal difficulties which may possibly emerge in the further proceedings to be taken will be met by legislation if they threaten any serious delay in the acquisition of the railway-line by the State.

It has for some time been recognised that greater efficiency in the education system would be obtained by decreasing the size of the classes under instruction; proposals will accordingly be laid before you for a substantial increase in the staff of the public schools. At the same time, in order to secure a full supply of well-qualified teachers, it is proposed to make provision, especially in the case of small schools, also for an increase in the salaries of teachers. The question of annual increments to salaries generally, and for giving greater facilities for the promotion and transfer of teachers, will also be submitted to you for your consideration.

Measures will be submitted to you dealing with national annuities, closer settlement extension, second ballot, Shipping and Seamen Act, Civil Service Amendment, slaughtering and inspection, contractors' and workers' liens, workers' compensation, friendly societies, naval subsidy, Meikle acquittal, back-blocks roading and bridging, public holidays; local bodies, tramway, gas, and electric-light companies' employees superannuation; Public Service Classification and Superannuation Amendment, Native lands, water-power leasing, Life Assurance Policies Amendment, consolidation of statute law, destitute persons relief, Government post audit, inspection of machinery, model by-laws, Native Townships Act, Mining Act, teachers' superannuation, police superannuation, school-teachers salaries and superannuation, land and income assessment, local authorities' subsidies, local Government, mental hospitals, hospital and charitable aid, the law of libel, counties, infant life protection, impounding, corporation contracts, the Judiciary, the Supreme Court Code, secret commissions, and other important matters.

In conclusion, I desire to express my confidence that you will give to all the matters I have brought under your notice your careful consideration and soundest judgment, and I trust that your labours and decisions may have God's blessing, resulting in promoting still further the prosperity, happiness, and permanent well-being of the people of this Dominion as a whole.

