



THE
NEW ZEALAND GAZETTE
 EXTRAORDINARY.

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THE First Session of the Seventeenth 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 much pleasure I meet you again in Parliament assembled to state to you the causes for which you have been summoned.

I am entitled to assume that you have followed with close and deep interest the statements of His Majesty's Ministers in England as to the present strength and fighting efficiency of the British navy, and more particularly as to the extensive changes in, and to, that navy, found to be necessary to enable the Empire to maintain its greatness, if not its existence, in case of war.

The gravity of the outlook upon the rapid growth of foreign naval armaments has impressed itself upon the statesmen of the United Kingdom, and His Majesty's Ministers there have outlined the naval programme which they deem essential to enable Great Britain to retain her supremacy on the seas.

You have doubtless seriously reflected upon the heavy burden which the maintenance of the British navy already imposes upon the United Kingdom, and of the great additions which will be made to this burden by the new naval programme.

It is quite unnecessary to remind you how vitally we in this Dominion are interested in the strength and efficiency of that navy, or of our obligations to Great Britain for the protection now and always afforded to our lives and liberties, and our property, trade, and commerce, by her fleets.

My Advisers, recognising not only the gravity of the situation in which the rapid growth of foreign naval armaments has placed our Mother-country, but also the great weight of the burden upon her people which the maintenance and strengthening of her navy involves, decided that, subject to ratification by Parliament, this Dominion should give a prompt and substantial proof both of its loyalty and its duty to the Empire by the offer of a first-class battleship of the Dreadnought type.

This offer has been graciously accepted by His Majesty's Home Government, and to make the gift effective you will be asked to ratify it.

Since this offer was made His Majesty's self-governing oversea dominions have all evinced their loyal desire to see the Imperial navy so strengthened as to secure that supremacy of the seas upon which the Empire has risen to its present greatness, and upon which that greatness now depends.

In these circumstances, His Majesty's Home Government has called to a Naval Conference, to be held in London in the last week in July next, responsible representatives of all the self-governing dominions, with a view to concerted and united action being taken throughout the Empire for naval supremacy and naval defence.

The importance of this Conference, not only to the United Kingdom itself, but to all His Majesty's dominions, has been recognised by the readiness with which each self-governing State has agreed to send representatives.

The Prime Minister of New Zealand will attend this Conference, as my Advisers deem it expedient, not only in view of the importance of the Conference to this Dominion and to the Nation, but also in view of the new part this country has assumed in Imperial defence by its offer of a Dreadnought, that New Zealand should be represented at the Conference by its Prime Minister.

To enable the Prime Minister to be present in London for the opening of the Conference, he must leave New Zealand in a short time, and cannot return before the end of September next.

This being the first session of a new Parliament, my Advisers deem it necessary that while the session lasts the Prime Minister should be in his place here to carry on his important duties, and to introduce, explain, and if necessary defend, the policy of the Government; and therefore to enable him to attend the Conference an early prorogation of Parliament is essential.

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

In accordance with the usual custom, Parliament would in the ordinary course of events have been summoned for the last week of this month, and, as you are aware, supplies have been voted to the thirtieth day of June instant. In view of the circumstances and the course I have already referred to, proposals for an extension of the appropriations to a suitable date will be submitted for your consideration. A statement showing approximately the financial position of the Dominion will be placed before you, and legislative authority asked to raise a sum of money required to carry on certain public works.

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

It is not considered necessary by my Advisers that any measures should be brought before you except the financial proposals already indicated by me as necessary to give effect to what my Advisers deem the wish of the people of New Zealand, that this Dominion should be represented at the impending Conference by its Prime Minister.

I trust that his attendance with that of the Ministers of the Crown from the other self-governing oversea dominions will result in a great and permanent scheme of Imperial naval defence—a scheme which, by involving a closer partnership between us and the Mother-country, will draw us to her nearer still, and will express our kinship in the tangible and visible evidences of the part we take in the defence of the Empire, and will, above all, with the blessing of God, make for the permanent peace of the world.