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WELLINGTON, TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 1910.

THE Third 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,—

Having been appointed by His Most Gracious Majesty as his representative in New Zealand, it gives me great pleasure to meet you now for the first time in Parliament assembled. The very warm and enthusiastic welcome accorded me upon my landing was a strong and stirring evidence of New Zealand's loyalty and devotion to His Majesty's throne and person, and I personally very much appreciated the kind words of welcome extended to me as his representative.

I look forward with great pleasure to making myself acquainted with the Dominion, its people, and its resources, and witnessing, when my other duties permit, the world-famed scenery of this interesting country.

It is only a few weeks since the British nation had to deplore the death of His late Most Gracious Majesty King Edward the Seventh, an event both profound in effect and appalling in suddenness.

On his demise a throb of grief went forth throughout the civilised world. Our late Sovereign's life was a strenuous one, and his constant desire was to promote the best interests of his people. He sought unremittingly to maintain their liberties and improve their conditions. In his death the world, in losing the greatest friend of peace, has suffered an incalculable loss. He died loved and revered by his subjects, and the memory of his works will live for ever in our

hearts. Messages of sincere sympathy and condolence were forwarded by the Prime Minister on behalf of the people of New Zealand through my predecessor to His Most Gracious Majesty King George the Fifth and the Royal family, to which a grateful and appreciative reply was received through the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

On the death of his revered father His Majesty assumed the throne as King George the Fifth, and the people of this Dominion most loyally acclaimed the reign of the new King, and his accession was fittingly proclaimed at the threshold of Parliament Buildings. In every city and in almost every borough and county throughout the Dominion similar functions took place.

I feel sure that this Dominion, which has already progressed so rapidly, has a still greater future before it, and it will ever during my term of office be my duty and my pleasure to assist in giving effect to the will of the people, and to the promotion of their highest aspirations and ideals.

I regret to announce to you that during the recess death has removed the Hon. Richard Harman Jeffares Reeves, the Hon. Francis Trask, and the Hon. James Holmes from the Legislative Council, and Mr. Frederick Ehrenfried Baume, K.C., from the House of Representatives, whose loss was in each case universally lamented throughout the Dominion.

It gives me special pleasure at this, the commencement of my term of office, to be able to congratulate you upon the splendid recovery this Dominion has made from the recent financial depression which affected it in common with the rest of the world.

It is gratifying to recognise the continued and marked improvement which is evinced in both the public finances and the industries of the Dominion, and probably it is fair to say that New Zealand is now in as sound and prosperous a condition as she has been at any time during her history. In this connection it is interesting to notice that the value of our products for last year exceeds that of the previous twelve months by a sum of upwards of six millions sterling.

During the last twelve months the alienation and settlement of Crown lands and of all lands purchased from Native owners, and also from European owners under the Land for Settlements Act, have continued with more than usual energy. The great and increasing demand for land by *bona fide* small settlers is conclusive proof of the need of the closer land-settlement policy of this Dominion, and of the necessity for procuring by every resource within the powers of Government the necessary land to reasonably satisfy this increasing demand. The purchase of Native lands for European settlement has been carried on with as much expedition as possible, and as far as the financial limits fixed by law permitted. It is gratifying to know that the Native owners throughout New Zealand who have surplus land for disposal are evincing a spirit of friendly co-operation with the new Maori Land Boards and with other statutory agents in making these surplus lands available for European settlement, while on the areas retained for their own use and occupation the settlement of the Maori owners is proceeding more vigorously than at any previous period in the history of the Maori race.

The Native Land Act, which came into force on the 31st March last, made radical and important changes in the pre-existing Native-land law, and although the Act has been in operation barely three months the results so far promise that what was expected on the passing of that important statute in the direction of facilitating and expediting the direct acquisition of surplus Native land by European settlers will be realised.

It has been found desirable for the sake of both the public and commercial interests of this Dominion to promote communication with Australia and some of the South Pacific islands by means of wireless telegraphy, and arrangements have been made to achieve this end.

The necessity for improving communication with backblock settlement in this country is increasingly recognised, and during the last twelve months very large sums have been spent in improving and forming road communication with the settlers on the more remote lands, which have been in recent years settled in small areas.

The operation of the New Zealand State-guaranteed Advances Act, passed last session, has already had beneficial results, and both country settlers and town workers, and also local bodies, have recognised the improved facilities and advantages for obtaining money furnished by that statute.

The greatest interest has been shown in all parts of New Zealand in the scheme contained in the Land Settlement Finance Act, although some further amendments are necessary to give the statute the free and effective operation my Advisers contemplate.

During the last recess this country has been honoured by a visit of that distinguished soldier, Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener, who, after examining our defence system, defence forces, and harbour defences, furnished my Advisers with a most valuable communication, containing a series of recommendations as to the most effective protection of this Dominion. These recommendations, so far as they were not confidential, have already been published, and have been studied with great and widespread interest.

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

The last year's returns of public revenue have been eminently satisfactory. The estimates of revenue and expenditure will in due course be laid before you. These have as usual been framed with a due regard to efficiency and economy.

The work of reducing the cost of the public service by amalgamating Departments and by reorganizing other branches of the public service has been completed, and the savings contemplated will be substantially realised.

You will be glad to learn that the Death Duties Act of last year has been found to work effectively and smoothly, and will produce the additional revenue which was contemplated at the time of its being passed.

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

Returns will be laid before you showing the results of traffic throughout our railway system, and your attention will be directed to various questions of importance in connection with the management and extension of that branch of the service.

The present condition of mail connections with the United Kingdom has been engaging the close attention of my Advisers, and negotiations are at present proceeding with a view to giving better and closer mail-services with Great Britain.

Consequent upon the recommendations made by Lord Kitchener, you will be asked to give your best consideration to amendments of the Defence Act of last year, which will provide under certain conditions for an extension of the age-limit for compulsory training.

You will also be asked to consider a number of other important modifications in and improvements of the scheme contained in that statute.

Your attention will be directed to the important question of land legislation, and the Land Bill of last year, with some amendments, will be again submitted to you for approval.

My Advisers are of opinion that the time has arrived when an effective scheme for the establishment of a sinking fund for the repayment of the public debt should be instituted, so that this country should have both a prospect and an assurance of discharging its public debt within a limited period of years. The statutory provisions for creating and carrying out such a scheme will be submitted for your consideration.

Legislation will also be introduced to afford relief in proper cases to the homes upon which the burden and expenses of maternity now fall heavily, and a provision will be made whereby the State will, in cases where the breadwinner earns only a small wage, make a substantial contribution towards this relief.

The National Annuities Bill of last year, with some amendments, will be introduced and submitted for your consideration.

My Advisers have given further attention to the very important question of local government, and proposals will be submitted to you for approval as the basis of a comprehensive measure upon the subject.

It is considered necessary for the protection of the people as a whole that effective anti-trust legislation should be placed on our statute-book, and a Bill for that purpose has been prepared, and in due course will be laid before you.

It has been recognised that in a democratic country the names of all those entitled to exercise the franchise should be upon the electoral rolls. This result it is found cannot be secured by leaving enrolment to voluntary initiative, and it has been decided to introduce a provision into our electoral law whereby suitable persons will be appointed to insure the enrolment of all adults entitled to the franchise.

Legislation will also be introduced for the purpose of establishing in this country what is known as the post-audit system in connection with our public accounts.

My Advisers have decided upon a complete revision of the existing prisons system of this country, and the new scheme, which has already been published, is being steadily put into force. To complete its operation, however, some legislation is necessary, and a Bill embodying the necessary provisions will in due course be submitted to you.

The existing mining legislation has been working smoothly, and the mining industry continues prosperous. Some amendments of the law, however, are deemed necessary, and these will in due course be submitted to you.

It has, after full consideration by my Advisers, been decided that in the best interests of this Dominion the chief sources of water-power should be retained in the hands of the Government, and that they should be developed for public, commercial, and mining purposes by State enterprise. To this end legislation will be introduced providing for the necessary powers and ways and means.

Bills amending or consolidating the law with regard to land settlement finance, land and income assessment, gaming, destitute persons, municipal corporations, Crown suits, public holidays, mental hospitals, Harbour Boards, Native reserves, Native townships, rating on Native lands, factories, shops and offices, companies, criminal appeals, bankruptcy, libel and slander, indecent literature, secret commissions, silver coinage, tramways, education, noxious weeds, and other important matters will be introduced for your consideration.

I feel sure that in dealing with all these proposals, aiming as they do at the further progress of this country and at the promotion of the material and social well-being of its people, you will use your best industry and judgment, and I trust that by the grace of God your deliberations and proceedings will be to the credit of Parliament, the good of New Zealand, and the honour of the Empire.