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THE Fourth Session of the Twenty-first Parliament of New Zealand was this day opened by the Governor-General, 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 in a spirit of thankfulness that in the opening paragraph of my speech I am able to record the complete recovery of the King from the effects of the serious illness from which His Majesty suffered during the earlier part of the present year.

The great pleasure I have in meeting you for the first time in the General Assembly, of which under the Constitution I am part, would be greater for me, as I know it would be for you, had there been still present with us the distinguished man who was my Prime Minister when I assumed office as Governor-General. For more than twenty-one years Mr. Massey had been the Leader in the House of Representatives of one of the great political parties, and for nearly thirteen consecutive years had been Prime Minister of this Dominion. In time of war, as in times of peace, he proved himself to be a true servant of the Empire, and it is not only among the people of this Dominion that the loss sustained by his death is realized. The messages of sympathy during his illness, and of condolence after his death, received by me from Their Majesties the King and Queen, from the leading statesmen of Great Britain, from the Governors-General, Governors, and Ministers of the other Dominions and Colonies, and from the Governments of the Allies of Great Britain, and of the United States of America, have testified the world-wide sense of the value of his public service. This is not the time or the place to record his life's work, or to attempt adequate expression of the public sorrow. With my Ministers, I adopt the concluding words of the message from the Prime Minister of Great Britain: "Mr. Massey's death will not be a loss to New Zealand only. The whole Empire will mourn him both as a man and a statesman, and many of us will long cherish the memory of a most genuine and lovable personality."

Acting on the advice of my Ministers, I proclaimed a portion of the Crown reserve at Point Halswell, in the Harbour of Wellington, to be a burial-place for Mr. Massey and his widow. Included in the legislation to be submitted to you will be an Act specifically appropriating to that purpose the land so defined.

On the 14th May last I appointed my Attorney-General, the Hon.¹ Sir Francis Bell, to be Prime Minister, and on his advice I confirmed the surviving Ministers in their several Ministerial offices and in their membership of the Executive Council, and also appointed the Hon. William Nosworthy to be Minister of Finance and Minister of Stamp Duties, those offices having become vacant by Mr. Massey's death. On the 30th May Sir Francis Bell tendered to me the resignation of himself and his colleagues, and on his advice I sent for the Hon. Joseph Gordon Coates, M.C., and appointed him to be Prime Minister. On Mr. Coates's advice I appointed the members of the Government who had resigned to hold again their respective offices and their membership of the Executive Council, except that in the case of the office of Postmaster-General the Hon. Sir James Parr was appointed in lieu of Mr. Coates.

It had been my intention before my first meeting with you to have visited many parts of the Dominion, and also the Cook Islands and our mandatory territory of Samoa, but the recent severe epidemic of infantile paralysis which caused so much sorrow and anxiety throughout the country, combined with the circumstances of Mr. Massey's illness and death, rendered such visits inadvisable. I hope to be able later to make myself more fully acquainted with every part of New Zealand and its Dependencies, and with every section of its people. It has been my happiness so far to find everywhere loyalty to our Sovereign and his Empire, general prosperity and contentment, and an absence of that unemployment which has caused and is causing so much anxiety in the Mother-country.

I take this opportunity of thanking the people of New Zealand most warmly for the kindness and consideration extended by one and all to Her Excellency and myself since our arrival in the Dominion. The kindly references to our parents which have been so frequently made have touched us greatly. The extreme courtesy and goodwill of the welcome which we have received have added much to the pleasure of our return to the scenes of our childhood, and have given us great encouragement in undertaking the duties which fall to us.

It is with pleasure that I have received evidence of the increasing well-being of the Cook Islands Dependencies and of the prosperity and welfare of the people of Western Samoa.

A complete reorganization and control of the public railways has been brought into operation, and has provided improved facilities and service to the people. Important works and improvements have been put in hand which, when completed, will greatly increase the efficiency of the Department and service to the public.

The Board created under recent legislation to inquire into and make recommendations upon the finance of discharged soldiers settled on the land has nearly completed its work, and there is reason to believe that action taken under your authority in pursuance of those recommendations has enabled many deserving soldier settlers to realize that they have opportunity in the present and hope for the future in their enterprise.

The conditions developed in certain areas of Crown lands in the North Island, by deterioration of pastures, which are gradually becoming replaced by native flora of various kinds, have been investigated by a special committee, which has submitted a valuable report. It is proposed to establish methods of dealing with such lands, and to assist settlers occupying them to carry out necessary improvements. You will be asked to make the necessary financial provision for the purpose.

My Ministers realize that the development of our primary industries demands an extension of the instructional services of the Department of Agriculture. It is proposed to increase the trained staff of the Department in order that information and advice may be provided directly to producers through the medium of trained Instructors stationed at various suitable centres throughout the Dominion. The existing services of the Department have already been the means of rendering material aid to producers, and provide a basis upon which a wider and more comprehensive service can be established.

The measures prepared for your consideration during your present session include provision for the amendment of Acts relating to Chattels Transfer, Local Bodies' Loans, Stone-quarries, Property Law, Land Transfers, Official Appointments and Documents, Public Works, Nurses Superannuation, Destitute Persons, Forests, Workers' Compensation for Accidents, and the Kauri-gum Industry.

Several important consolidation measures have been prepared, and will be submitted to you. Among them you will find Bills consolidating and amending the Coal-mines Acts, Land for Settlement Acts, Public Revenues Acts, Hauraki Plains Acts, and Fire Brigades Acts. If time allows, you will also be asked to consider and pass an Act consolidating the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Acts. A Child Welfare Bill, providing for the establishment of Children's Courts, for the care of indigent and delinquent children, and limiting the employment of children in various forms of employment, and for the better administration of child-welfare institutions, has been prepared, and my Ministers hope that you may find it possible to pass this into law during the present session.

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

You will be gratified to find that the financial operations of the Dominion in the year ended 31st March last resulted in a surplus in the Consolidated Fund of £1,243,800. The estimates of public expenditure for the present year have been prepared for your consideration with due regard to economy.

The demand for money for the Office of Advances to Settlers and Advances to Workers has been most urgent, and it has been found difficult to meet the requirements in full. Under your authority a loan of seven millions has been recently raised in London on terms which compare favourably with similar loans raised about the same time by other Dominions and public bodies. Such part of the proceeds of that loan as are not urgently required for the continuance of public works, including hydro-electric extension, will be available for advances to settlers and workers. In addition, the repayments of principal to the State Advances Department will provide approximately £1,300,000 in each year for investment in further advances.

My Ministers are aware of the difficulty that settlers and workers are experiencing in obtaining money for development and housing purposes. Very careful attention has been given to ways and means to assist, and proposals will be submitted in due course for your consideration.

You will be asked specially to consider a Bill dealing with the sinking funds of the public debt. It is not proposed to limit the provision made under the existing Act for the ultimate extinction of the debt. But experience has shown that investment of sinking funds in permanent securities is not advantageous as compared with investment in the purchase of such of our own securities as are at a discount on the London market, and the main object of the Bill is to invest the annual payments from the Consolidated Fund in the form of liquid securities so far as immediate opportunity does not occur for the purchase of our own public-debt debentures. At the same time provision is made for continuance of payment to the sinking fund of interest on the part of the debt so extinguished.

During and after the war many holders of land found difficulty in paying their land-tax, which by the statute is made a first charge upon the land itself. Time for payment was conceded in many cases, and transfers of property have taken place, the purchasers being ignorant of the existing encumbrance of tax, and this in a considerable number of cases is thought to be unfair. The matter was dealt with in part by legislation of your last session, but you will be invited to consider further provisions for the relief of the charge of arrears of land-tax in cases involving hardship to purchasers.

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

I commend these several matters to your earnest consideration, and I trust that Divine Providence may guide your deliberations to the advantage of our Sovereign and his Empire and the benefit of New Zealand and its Dependencies.

