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THE Fourth Session of the Twenty-sixth Parliament of New Zealand was this day opened by the Governor-General, when His Excellency was pleased to make the following statement of the causes of the calling of this Session of Parliament together:—

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

The gravity of the situation that has this week developed in the Pacific has, in the opinion of my Advisers, made it necessary that you should be called together at very short notice, in order that my Ministers may lay before you an account of the position as it has arisen and of the steps that they have taken and will feel it necessary to take in the immediate future.

In the Middle-East theatre of war New Zealand troops have played a full and noble part in the struggle now in progress. The New Zealand Division bore the brunt of the fighting during the early stages of the battle and met the full fury of the concentrated German and Italian armoured divisions. The casualties must inevitably be heavy, and my Ministers know that all sections of the community will join in the deepest sympathy with those who are afflicted or bereaved.

Negotiations between the Governments of the United States of America and of Japan, undertaken by the United States Government in the hope that it might still be possible to establish in the Pacific, by agreement with the Japanese, those principles of law, order, and international fair dealing which the United States, no less than the British Commonwealth and its Allies, are determined to uphold, were brought to a tragic conclusion this week. While conversations in Washington were still proceeding, the Japanese, by treacherous attacks on the great American Naval Base at Pearl Harbour, on Malaya, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and other British and American territories, have unmasked their real intentions.

My Ministers have not been taken unawares by these developments. They have been kept fully in touch with the progress of events and, with His Majesty's Governments in other portions of the British Commonwealth, they have from time to time been called upon to express their views on the situation as it developed. As a matter of prudent precaution they have, for some time past, felt it necessary to prepare for hostilities in this area, and on the outbreak of war with Japan all necessary steps to place this Dominion in readiness for immediate defence were taken without delay. Further and more far-reaching measures must be taken at an early date, and my Government's intentions in this respect will be laid before you for your consideration.

War in the Pacific, perhaps at our very doors, brings with it many grave problems, and in the opinion of my Ministers it is incumbent upon all the people of this Dominion to realize the necessity of exerting our greatest efforts in the common cause and to recognize at once that there must inevitably be far-reaching adjustments in our normal mode of life.

We who uphold freedom and democracy know now beyond the possibility of doubt whom we must fight. The issue is now clearly joined, and, though the final result is certain, the way may well be long and hard and every section of the community must expect and cheerfully accept the sacrifices that the struggle may require.

My Advisers do not propose on this occasion to transact the ordinary business of Parliament. It is their intention that at this meeting you should confine your attention to war measures, and in these matters may Almighty God guide your deliberations in wisdom and in honour.