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THE First Session of the Thirty-first 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 MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Since I last opened Parliament the people of New Zealand have again had the opportunity of electing their representatives to this House. The same period has also seen a number of significant developments in international relations. Some of these have an immediate and vital bearing on the wellbeing and security of our people, and your early assembly on this occasion reflects the desire of my Ministers to keep Parliament promptly and fully informed on these questions.

Unhappily, the world picture remains one of tension and instability, overshadowed by the threat of new weapons of devastating power. Only the unity and strength of the nations of the free world can, in the view of my Advisers, preserve peace for their peoples. Close co-operation with other Commonwealth countries and the United States of America, together with active participation in the United Nations, continue, therefore, to be central factors in my Government's policy. The Commonwealth Conference in London which my Prime Minister attended in February has again afforded a striking demonstration of Commonwealth solidarity and strength which will give encouragement both to our own peoples and to our friends.

There is some ground for satisfaction at the cessation of active fighting in the international sphere, and the efforts of my Government in the Security Council to bring about a cease-fire in the area of Formosa will, it is hoped, be successful and pave the way for the preservation of peace in the Far East.

The situation in South-east Asia is of special concern to my Ministers. This area has become the cornerstone of collective security in the Pacific, and is therefore vitally important to New Zealand. As part of an effective contribution to the defence of the area, my Government has decided to transfer from the Middle East to Malaya No. 14 Fighter Ground Attack Squadron and to return there a flight of No. 41 Transport Squadron. Consideration is being given to further military measures which New Zealand might be able to undertake not only in our own interests, but also to ease to some extent the burden at present borne by the United Kingdom. The security and stability of South-east Asia received special attention at the recent meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London, and, of course, at the meeting of the South-east Asia Treaty Organization Powers, which was attended by my Minister of External Affairs.

My Government's efforts towards the attainment of peace and prosperity throughout the world are also seen in its work on the United Nations Security Council, and in its substantial support of the Colombo Plan and other programmes of economic assistance.

My Ministers have continued to watch over the wellbeing and progress of the peoples in our island territories. Special attention is also being paid to the outcome of the Constitutional Convention held recently in Western Samoa and to the further development of self-governing institutions in that territory.

Under the able leadership of the United Kingdom, the position of the sterling area has shown further improvement. My Government has continued its policy of full co-operation with other Commonwealth Governments in measures to increase trade and to build up the gold and dollar reserves of the sterling area.

The national economy has expanded considerably since I last addressed you, and problems of substantial over-employment and high levels of business activity are now occupying the attention of my Ministers. Primary production has shown a satisfactory increase and, despite some decline in prices for butter and cheese in the United Kingdom, export prices generally have remained good.

My Government is working closely with the representatives of the primary industries concerned to ensure that accumulated funds are used prudently in the interests of economic stability in New Zealand and for the further development of our farming resources. Continued progress has been made in bringing new land into production, thus helping the settlement of many of our ex-servicemen and of a limited number of civilians. An extensive programme of research into problems of soils, pastures, farm crops, fertilizers, plant pests and diseases, designed to improve both the quality and the quantity of food-production, is being actively pursued.

The successful flotation of the National Development Loan, and the borrowing of a further ten million pounds in London, have ensured sufficient finance for the extensive works programme required for the progressive development of our natural resources and the provision of services for our growing population. This programme has, however, been handicapped by a shortage of labour, and, in a number of cases, capital expenditure during the financial year just ending will be rather less than was anticipated. The maintenance of a proper balance between the several sectors of our economic development is a matter of continuing concern to my Ministers.

Estimates of expenditure will be placed before you for your consideration in due course.

The launching of the very large pulp and paper scheme at Kawerau for the harvesting of our forest wealth is rapidly nearing completion. It is expected that the Tasman Pulp and Paper Company's mills, which will be amongst the most modern in the world, will be in production this year, thus adding to the productive wealth of our country with

consequent saving in dollars and improvement in sterling funds. The speed at which the vast undertaking has been built and the energy and enthusiasm of all those working on this project merit the highest commendation of the people. Records have been broken in many fields. These comments apply equally to the forestry work, the railway construction, and the harbour works at Mount Maunganui.

My Government has also made considerable progress with the project to exploit geothermal energy in the production of electricity and heavy water. In addition, the development of our resources of hydro-electric power has proceeded steadily in spite of difficulties in obtaining sufficient man-power for designing and construction work. Work on the extensive hydro-electric scheme at Roxburgh, after a somewhat difficult beginning, is now proceeding at record speed, and there are indications that power will be available before the contract date.

My Ministers realize the value of a steadily growing tourist traffic from overseas, and steps are being taken to encourage the development of this industry. You will be asked to consider a Bill establishing a State Hotel Corporation, which will take over hotels at present owned by my Government and give further impetus towards the improvement of tourist facilities throughout the country.

My Advisers are fully aware of the importance to New Zealand of efficient transport and communications services. The modernization of our railways system is making steady progress, and up-to-date railcars and diesel electric rolling stock are continuing to arrive from overseas.

The new roading administration set up by my Government has led to greater co-operation between local authorities, road users, and the Government in the progressive development of our roading system to cope with the increasing weight and density of modern traffic. Special financial assistance has already been made available to local authorities in cases where the improvement of local roads would otherwise have been held up. You will be asked to consider a Bill to alter the constitution of the National Roads Board.

Following the reorganization of our external air services, the operation of the trans-Tasman service has become the sole responsibility of the Australian and New Zealand Governments. This service is now operated by fast, modern land planes in place of the flying-boats which served our country so well for many years. The reorganization of both the National and Tasman Airways systems has resulted in their operations being conducted on a profitable basis instead of being a heavy burden on the taxpayers. There is considerable interest overseas in the work being done in New Zealand in using air transport as an aid to primary production, particularly by way of aerial topdressing.

The volume of traffic passing through our postal services is always a sensitive barometer of economic conditions, and this, at the present time, is at a record level. My Ministers are considering plans for the improvement of postal facilities and of our telephone system.

Full employment has been maintained, and, indeed, the demand for labour remains in many cases unsatisfied. Industrial relations have been excellent during the past year, and there have been no major industrial disturbances. You will be asked to consider a Bill revising and consolidating the Shops and Offices Act and incorporating proposals dealing with safety, health, and trading hours. Measures to consolidate the Workers' Compensation Act and to amend the Tenancy Act in the light of present-day conditions will also be introduced.

My Ministers have continued to pursue a vigorous policy aimed at the provision of adequate housing. The record number of homes built during the past year is a reflection of the special encouragement given to those concerned with the building and financing of houses. The indications are that about 18,000 new houses will be built during the present financial year.

My Advisers are particularly concerned with the provision of adequate school accommodation for the increasing numbers of pupils, and the funds allocated for this purpose during the current year are at record level. A Bill dealing with the appointment and promotion of teachers will be placed before you.

A national conference will be held this year to consider further advances in the promotion of the welfare of old people. You will be asked to consider a Bill validating increases in certain social security benefits and war pensions which my Government decided upon following the recent wage pronouncement of the Court of Arbitration.

A matter of primary concern to my Ministers is the wellbeing of the Maori people. Special attention is being paid to the development and settlement of Maori lands, particularly in the North Auckland, Waikato, and King country areas, and to the provision of housing. Proposals will be laid before you to improve the law relating to Maori Trust Boards and to revise and consolidate the law relating to Maori reserves and lands of a similar nature.

There will be placed before you an amendment of the Police Force Act to provide for control of the Police Force by a Commission. My Advisers intend to introduce at an early date a Judicature Amendment Bill, to enable the number of permanent Judges of the Supreme Court to be increased and to provide for pensions for Judges' widows. You will also be asked to consider the revision of that part of the Mental Health Act which relates to persons charged with or convicted of offences. This will complete the scheme of reform of the criminal law begun last year with the Criminal Justice and Penal Institutions Acts.

An important measure revising the law relating to adoptions will be brought down during the session. Other new legislation designed to bring the law into harmony with modern conditions includes a Family Protection Bill, a Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Amendment Bill, and a Wills Amendment Bill. An amendment to the Licensing Act will put into effect certain recommendations of the Licensing Control Commission to stop the sale of liquor by unlicensed agents.

The provisions of the Printers and Newspapers Registration Act are out of date in some respects, and you will be asked to consider a Newspapers Registration Bill, which will replace the present Act.

In the field of general administration there will be placed before you a Bill revising and consolidating the Counties Act and its amendments, a Bill dealing with certain urgent questions relating to the use of, and access to, the waters of Lake Taupo, and a Bill revising the existing law as set out in the Impounding Act 1908.

Your early assembly this year has been required mainly to consider the reports of my Prime Minister concerning the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers held last month in London, and of my Minister of External Affairs and Defence on the Bangkok meeting of Foreign Ministers of the South-east Asia Collective Defence Treaty Organization.

These two conferences were of the greatest importance to New Zealand and to the Commonwealth, and I commend to your earnest consideration the study of their deliberations and of all other matters relating to the economic stability and the lasting wellbeing of the people of our country.

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God will rest upon your counsels.