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THE Third Session of the Eighteenth 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 gives me much pleasure to meet you for the first time in Parliament assembled. The loyal and enthusiastic welcome with which I was received as His Majesty's Representative by the people of this Dominion upon my arrival was specially gratifying, and the warm receptions which were accorded to me by His Majesty's Maori subjects were regarded with feelings of deep appreciation. These demonstrations I look upon as a sincere expression of the loyalty to our Sovereign entertained by the whole of his subjects in this Dominion.

Since assuming the responsibilities of the Government, I have visited various parts of the North and South Islands, and have taken every opportunity of making myself familiar with the general circumstances of the country and the aspirations of the people. It has given me pleasure in the course of my visits to become known to large numbers of the inhabitants of the Dominion. I have observed with the deepest interest the resources and potentialities of the country, and the many signs of prosperity and comfort that are apparent in the lives of the people. I feel confident that when the great natural advantages which this country possesses become more widely known in Great Britain many suitable settlers will be attracted to its shores.

It is pleasing for me to be able to announce that the volume of trade during the past year was the largest recorded in the history of the Dominion. The outlook for the coming season is bright, and although a world-wide financial stringency, caused by the disturbed condition of affairs in Europe and by large and

extraordinary demands for money, has not disappeared, still there is every reason to believe that the experience through which New Zealand and other countries are passing is only transient, and that, notwithstanding temporary financial restriction, the Dominion may look forward to another year of continued prosperity and satisfactory remuneration for those engaged in her industries.

The news of the assassination of King George of Greece, the brother of Queen Alexandra, was received in this Dominion with profound regret. The messages of sympathy from the Government and people of New Zealand, which were transmitted by me to the Queen Mother, were duly acknowledged.

I deeply regret that death has removed two much-esteemed members of the General Assembly in the persons of Sir Arthur Robert Guinness, late Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Sir William Jukes Steward, a member of the Legislative Council, and a former Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The arrival of H.M.S. "New Zealand" was appropriately celebrated, and every possible opportunity was afforded the citizens and school-children to visit the ship during her stay in New Zealand waters.

The agricultural and pastoral industries of the Dominion still continue to expand, and the constant demand for small areas of land points to the conclusion that the future of New Zealand is closely bound up with development in the country districts, and that land suitable for settlement, whether Crown land, Native land, or privately owned land, cannot be allowed to remain unproductive, but must be utilized for the benefit of the Dominion as a whole. You will be glad to learn that during the recess the operations under the Land for Settlements Act have been extensive. Returns will be laid before you showing the area of land purchased and subdivided in pursuance of the powers contained in this statute. The subdivision of privately owned estates is also proceeding satisfactorily.

The construction of railways and the making of roads are being vigorously proceeded with, and no effort is being spared to develop the agricultural, pastoral, mining, and other resources of the country.

The legislation passed last session relative to the settlement and occupation of land is working satisfactorily and is enabling a considerable number of settlers who were holders of leases from the Crown to exchange their leases for freehold titles. A measure will be submitted for your consideration extending the principle contained in the legislation of last year to lands held upon lease under the Land for Settlements Acts, and also providing for the more satisfactory settlement of land in mining districts, while at the same time preserving mining rights and privileges.

The leases of a number of runs held from the Crown under pastoral license expired during the past year, and, pending the result of legislation during the present session, were renewed for one year only. You will be asked to amend the law under which these lands are held so as to give better security of tenure and more encouragement for improvement, with the object of increasing the carrying-capacity and productiveness of the large areas of hill country suitable only for sheep-farming.

The rapid progress of settlement in many parts of the Dominion accentuates the urgent necessity for improving the present means of communication by the construction of branch railways. In response to numerous requests from groups of settlers that they should be permitted to construct branch railways themselves, my Advisers propose to introduce legislation which will give effect to this expressed desire and at the same time carefully safeguard the public interest.

During his visit to Great Britain the Hon. the Minister of Defence discussed with representatives of His Majesty's Government matters relating to naval defence in the Pacific. The result of these conferences will be laid before you.

During the recess the Minister of Customs visited Australia, and there entered into negotiations for a reciprocal trade treaty between the Commonwealth of Australia and New Zealand. The papers relating to these negotiations will be presented to Parliament. A reciprocal old-age pension agreement was also discussed, and proposals will be submitted to you for ratification this session.

I am pleased to be able to inform you that, with a view to establishing the fishing industry of the Dominion upon a sound basis, the Government has arranged for the Chief Administrator of the Canadian Fisheries Department to visit New Zealand.

You will be gratified to learn that the system of compulsory military training is firmly established, and that its beneficial effect upon the character and physique of the youth of the Dominion is already apparent. The excellent spirit which pervades the whole Force and the keenness displayed by all ranks augur well for the future.

My Government has invited General Sir Ian Hamilton, Inspector-General of the Oversea Forces, to visit New Zealand. The invitation has been accepted, and this distinguished officer will arrive in the Dominion in April, 1914.

It is a matter for congratulation that employment, especially in the rural districts, can be obtained without difficulty.

It is proposed to submit for your consideration some important amendments to the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, which it is hoped will enable the parties to industrial disputes to effect a speedy and reasonable settlement without involving the country in the trade dislocations and industrial losses which strikes and lockouts invariably cause.

A Bill consolidating and amending the Shops and Offices Act will also be introduced.

During the past year a considerable area of land has been purchased in pursuance of the powers contained in the Workers' Dwellings Act. A Bill will be introduced to enable the operations of this useful measure to be more easily applied to country districts. The estimates of expenditure for this year will include a sum sufficient to provide for this work.

A gentleman of high standing in the railway world has been appointed General Manager of Railways, and will take up his duties in September next.

Mr. H. W. Northcroft, N.Z.C., a gentleman well known throughout the Dominion, who served as a Stipendiary Magistrate for many years, has been appointed Resident Commissioner at the Cook Islands.

The important question of the settlement of areas of unused Native land has received the earnest consideration of my Advisers, and a Bill will be laid before you containing provisions which will make for the more expeditious settlement of such lands. A measure dealing with the rating of Native lands will also be submitted to you.

A section of the Royal Commission appointed by His Majesty to inquire into the trade of the Empire visited New Zealand, and every facility was afforded by my Advisers to enable it to gain the fullest information regarding the trade of the Dominion.

Commissions were appointed during the recess to inquire into the subjects of forestry and the working of the Public Trust Office. The reports of these Commissions will be duly placed before you.

GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,—

The state of the country's finance made it necessary that the Hon. the Minister of Finance should pay a visit to Great Britain during the recess. You will be pleased to hear that his mission was eminently successful, and that, notwithstanding the existence of unfavourable financial conditions in England, he was able to complete arrangements of a highly satisfactory character.

Particulars of the various transactions which the Minister successfully negotiated will be submitted to you for consideration.

The public revenue is steadily increasing, and you will doubtless be gratified to learn that as a result of the increased taxation upon large estates the receipts derived from this source have been considerably augmented, and, more important still, that subdivision and settlement have been encouraged and accelerated.

The estimates for the services of the ensuing year will be laid before you without delay.

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

A measure will be submitted to you providing for the reform of the Legislative Council in a manner which my Advisers believe will increase the usefulness of that branch of the Legislature.

Proposals will also be introduced by which it is hoped that the cost of living will be lessened to persons of small incomes.

There are now ready for your consideration Bills consolidating and amending the law relating to pensions, and a measure bringing the law of copyright into line with the law of Great Britain and other leading European nations. Measures amending the existing statutes affecting local bodies, a Graduated Income-tax Bill, a consolidation and amendment of the State-guaranteed Advances Acts, an amendment of the Public Revenues Act, an amendment of the Land Transfer Act, a Bill defining the law of libel, measures enabling advances to be made to persons engaged in the fruit industry, amending the law governing the Police Force, altering the constitution of the Public Trust Office Board, as well as other Bills dealing with matters of public interest, will be placed before you.

All these measures, designed as they have been in the interests of the people who inhabit this Dominion, I confide to your careful attention, and I trust that Divine Providence will bless your efforts to discharge efficiently your onerous duties.