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THE Fourth 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 is with sincere pleasure that I again meet you in Parliament assembled.

During the recess I have visited many parts of the Dominion, and have noticed with pleasure the general contentment which obtains amongst all classes. The settlers engaged in pastoral and agricultural pursuits are prospering, industries are flourishing, and the conditions of labour which exist in the Dominion are in the main sufficient to provide reasonable comfort and happiness for the prudent worker. It is gratifying to be able to congratulate you once more upon the remarkable prosperity of the country. Trade, as evidenced by the Customs returns, has been unexampled. The value of the exports from our shores has reached an unprecedented height, and the imports represent in money's worth an amount never before equalled. On every hand there are signs of advancement. Settlement of the land is progressing rapidly, development is proceeding apace, and the Dominion is steadily becoming a country in which the small holder predominates.

The intercourse which I have enjoyed with the people has served to confirm my confidence in their loyalty to the Throne and devotion to our most gracious Sovereign.

It is fitting that I should mention the loss sustained by Her Royal Highness, the Princess Louise, in the death of her husband, His Grace the Duke of Argyll. I cabled the condolences of my Government and the people of New Zealand, and they have been duly acknowledged.

I have recently visited the Islands of the Cook Group, which form part of the Dominion of New Zealand, and was accompanied by the Hon. Dr. Pomare, the Minister in Charge of the Administration of the Islands. I am satisfied that the information obtained during my visit will enable my Ministers to improve the condition of these possessions of the Dominion. The measures to be proposed to you by my Government in relation to education were explained, and were received with great satisfaction by the Natives throughout the Islands. My Ministers recognize the responsibility which the Government of the Dominion has assumed in regard to the Islands, and have had under their consideration the legislation which has been enacted in past years. They propose to submit to you a measure by which those laws will be recast, revised, and consolidated.

It is with satisfaction that I am able to announce that the smallpox epidemic which broke out in this Dominion last year has been coped with successfully. Every effort is being made to prevent the recrudescence of this disease.

The San Francisco mail-service contract, which terminated in March last, has been renewed for a period of five years from the 1st April, 1914. Provision has been made for a considerable reduction in the rate of freight for butter to America by both the Vancouver and the San Francisco routes, and, to meet the expected increased demand for space, two larger steamers of improved design are to be placed in the service from the 31st December, 1915.

During the past year three new wireless-telegraph stations have been established: two high-power stations—at Awanui and Awarua—and a low-power station at the Chatham Islands.

Under the land legislation of the last two sessions full effect is being given to the intention of Parliament. Tenants of Crown and settlement land have been enabled to acquire the fee-simple of their holdings, the subdivision of privately owned estates is proceeding rapidly, the tenures of land (including land within mining districts) have been improved, pastoral tenants have been granted the right to elect between accepting full valuation for improvements at the termination of existing licenses and a new license over the whole or part of their runs at a revised rental, and in all parts of the country closer settlement has been promoted.

The legislation authorizing the constitution of special road districts, providing as it does for the expenditure of the moneys received from the lands upon the construction of roads and bridges, is much appreciated, and will be of great value to the settlers living in remote and isolated parts of the country.

The Crown lands of the Dominion which still remain unoccupied are being surveyed and opened for selection as expeditiously as circumstances permit.

During the last financial year there has been a gratifying increase in the revenue derived from Crown lands and land-for-settlements estates, the amount received having exceeded all previous records.

I deeply regret that since I last met you the Dominion has lost through death the valuable services of Sir William Russell, a member of the Legislative Council, and of Mr. George Laurenson, member of Parliament for Lyttelton.

The closing months of the year 1913 were marked by an industrial struggle which seriously menaced the trade and prosperity of the country. At the commencement of the trouble scenes of violence were frequently witnessed, and breaches of the law were of daily occurrence; but, thanks to the efficiency of the permanent police and to the admirable public spirit displayed by citizens of the Dominion who proffered their services as foot and mounted special constables, peace and order were speedily restored, the produce of the country was shipped without undue delay to the markets of the world, and a state of industrial quiet re-established.

The problem of the cost of living has engaged the attention of my Advisers during the recess, and certain proposals relating to this question will be placed before you for consideration.

When I last met you the conditions of the principal money-markets of the world made it difficult to obtain financial assistance for public works and other services. I am pleased to be able to announce that during the last financial

year circumstances combined to make money more plentiful, and my Advisers were able to procure at reasonable rates sums of money sufficient to meet the general requirements of the Dominion, besides arranging for the redemption, renewal, and conversion of maturing loans raised in past years.

The completion of the Main Trunk line between Wellington and Auckland has tended to open up large areas of Native and Crown lands that were lying unproductive, but to-day the settlers upon these and other lands in the Dominion, through want of adequate roads and railways, are working under disadvantageous conditions. My Advisers are of opinion that no policy of land-settlement is sound which does not include a progressive scheme for road-construction, and propose to submit for your consideration a measure which makes provision for the creation of satisfactory means of communication in isolated and badly roaded districts. Further, the remarkable growth of settlement and the rapid expansion of the business of the country during recent years have convinced my Ministers of the necessity for a strong and vigorous policy of public-works construction, and the speedy completion of the more important lines of railway now in progress.

The Tongariro National Park, which lies half-way between Wellington and Auckland, comprising 62,300 acres, and containing within its boundaries interesting mountain scenery and other natural attractions, can with very little expenditure be made one of the most popular holiday resorts in the Dominion. In order that this object may be achieved it is intended to so alter the constitution of the present Board as to provide for the inclusion of persons specially interested in the conservation of the natural beauties of New Zealand.

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

The estimates for the year have been framed with due regard to economy, consistent with efficiency, and will be duly laid before you.

Notwithstanding the non-inclusion of the proceeds of land-sales, and the loss of railway income consequent on the dislocation of industries by the strike, and on the smallpox epidemic, the public revenue for the past financial year has shown a substantial increase. Full information regarding the recent loan transactions will be placed before you.

The ever-increasing demand on the part of the public for treatment in our general hospitals will entail additional expenditure upon buildings for the reception of patients, and for the maintenance of patients admitted to those institutions.

It has been recognized for many years that the system upon which subsidies have been paid, and grants from the public funds have been made, to local bodies for development purposes is objectionable, unbusinesslike, and uneconomical. A Bill will be introduced containing provisions which, it is hoped, will ensure a fairer apportionment and a more careful expenditure of these public moneys.

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

A Bill providing for the election of members of the Legislative Council by the system of proportional representation in large electoral divisions was introduced in the Legislative Council in the second session of the year 1912, but was then postponed by the Council for consideration in the following year. In the same session the House of Representatives passed resolutions affirming the necessity for reform of the Constitution in the direction proposed by that Bill. In the session of 1913 another Bill to the same effect, modified in some of its provisions, was introduced in the Legislative Council, but failed to obtain the approval of the Council. The Bill of 1913 will again be introduced during your present session in the Legislative Council.

At the commencement of the session of 1913 the Legislative Council consisted of forty-two members. On the 1st July, 1914, if no new appointments were now made, the number of members of the Council would be reduced by effluxion of the terms of appointment and by death to twenty-eight, of

whom seven hold appointments for life. It is therefore found necessary to make further present appointments not only for the purpose of passing into law the Bill reforming the Constitution of the Council, but also for due consideration of all legislation submitted to both Houses of Parliament. Inasmuch as the proposed change in the Constitution has been postponed by the Legislative Council until the session immediately preceding a general election, my Advisers, following the constitutional precedent of the Act by which the abolition of the provinces was effected in the year 1875, now propose that the Legislative Council Act shall become law during the present session, but that its commencement shall be postponed until after the session of Parliament to be held in the year 1915.

During the past year the training of the land forces of the Dominion has made satisfactory progress. At the invitation of the Government, General Sir Ian Hamilton, Inspector-General of the Overseas Forces, recently visited the Dominion and inspected every unit of the citizen army and every Cadet company. The units of the field forces were assembled for their annual training, and his inspection in five camps enabled him to observe the organization of the troops, the qualifications of the higher Commanders and staffs, and the practice of the three arms in field operations. The conduct of the men of the citizen army and of the Cadets at the Territorial camps, at the Cadet concentrations, and during the journeys by rail and sea to and from the places of assembly was, as a rule, exemplary. The season was late, the weather was generally unfavourable, yet, notwithstanding these disadvantageous conditions, the spirit of the troops and Cadets was all that could be desired, and afforded a valuable testimony to the benefits of the training. The assembling of the units of the Territorial Forces in camp and all Cadet companies for inspection at the same time taxed the organization and administrative machinery of the Defence and Railway Departments, and it was only owing to the zeal and energy and unceasing hard work of those responsible for district and local arrangements that it was rendered possible.

The valuable criticisms and suggestions which the Inspector-General has made and the advice which he has tendered are receiving the consideration of the Government.

The defence of the Pacific, a problem of great difficulty, has engrossed the attention of my Advisers during the recess, and, in accordance with a decision communicated to you during your last session of Parliament, Captain Hall-Thompson has been appointed to act as Adviser to the Government on Naval matters, and to command the training-ship lent by the Admiralty.

It is probable that during the forthcoming year a conference on Naval affairs, to which the Government of New Zealand has already been invited to send representatives, will be convened by the Imperial Government.

Seven months ago the present General Manager of the Dominion railways commenced his new duties. He has since been engaged in inspecting the various railway-lines throughout the Dominion and in making himself conversant with the railway system and its workings. In the comprehensive report upon this large State undertaking which the General Manager is preparing he is making recommendations which, if given effect to, will make the railways of the country more valuable to the commercial community and more attractive to the travelling public. To carry into effect the important works which must be undertaken to ensure the proper and safe working of the railways of the Dominion, proposals will be submitted for your consideration.

In accordance with the legislation of last session a Board of Agriculture has been constituted, and has commenced its duties. The Board consists of practical and experienced agriculturalists, and it is confidently expected that by its interest and advice the agricultural industry will be greatly benefited.

The system of workers' homes has been extended to the country districts. It is intended to submit legislation providing that the area of land attached to a worker's home shall in all such cases be regulated according to its quality or producing-capacity, the object of my Advisers being to give as many workers as

possible an opportunity of owning their own homes at reasonable prices and on easy terms, with land surrounding each home appropriate to the locality in which it is situated.

The state of the education system of the Dominion has been closely investigated by a parliamentary Committee and by the members of a Commission, and as a result of their deliberations my Advisers have decided to lay before you a Bill which, while improving the conditions of employment of teachers, aims also at effecting a general advance in methods of education.

The decrease of infantile mortality in New Zealand is most gratifying, and fully justifies assistance being afforded by the Government to the Society for the Health of Women and Children in its efforts to disseminate by its literature, and by the training of nurses and midwives, a wider knowledge of all that pertains to the successful rearing of infants.

The visit of a party of members of the Imperial Parliament to New Zealand during your last session was welcomed by myself and my Advisers, as evidencing the general desire, in which I am well assured you join, for closer association of the Parliaments of the Empire. My Ministers were enabled to confer with Lord Emmott, the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, who was chairman of the party of visitors, upon several questions which are of interest to both Governments.

Early this year New Zealand welcomed at Auckland the tenth session of the Australasian Medical Congress. My Advisers are giving earnest consideration to the conclusions arrived at by the Congress.

During the present year the British Association will hold its meeting in Australia. It has been arranged that some of the distinguished scientific gentlemen attending that meeting shall afterwards visit New Zealand and deliver addresses on their special subjects.

During next year a great Exhibition will be held at San Francisco, and this Dominion has been invited by the United States to take part in their national event. My Ministers have made arrangements for the proper representation of New Zealand, and there is reason to believe that this country will as a result reap substantial commercial advantage.

During the recess considerable discussion has taken place upon two subjects in respect of which it is apparent that public opinion is largely divided—firstly, amendments of the licensing laws, and, secondly, the request that definite questions relating to Bible-reading in schools shall be submitted to the electors by referendum at the ensuing general election. You will have opportunity during the present session of arriving at a conclusion upon both issues.

Measures relating to the following further subjects have been prepared and will be placed before you for consideration: Inspection of Machinery; Masters and Apprentices; Motor Regulation and License; the Iron and Steel Industry; the Fruit-preserving Industry; Inscription of Loans; Fire Brigades; the Law of Libel; Local Authorities; Local Elections; Rating; Land Laws; Contractors' and Workmen's Liens; Public Servants' Superannuation; the New Zealand University; the Victoria College Council; and other matters.

I commend all the matters to which I have referred to your careful consideration, and I trust that under Divine providence your efforts to promote the happiness and well-being of the people of New Zealand may be successful.