

It is fitting that I should take this opportunity to express a warm tribute to the distinguished services rendered to New Zealand and the Empire by Sir Joseph Ward. For over forty years he has devoted himself to the public life of the Dominion, serving as a member of the House of Representatives, as a Minister of the Crown, and for seven years as Prime Minister. I feel sure I am expressing your own sentiments as well as mine in the cordial hope that Sir Joseph Ward will be speedily restored to good health, and that he may be spared to enjoy many years of well-earned happiness.

At the recent Naval Disarmament Conference in London the Dominion was represented by its High Commissioner, and the resulting Treaty was duly signed on its behalf, in common with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions. A copy of the Treaty will be laid before you in due course for your consideration.

My Government support whole-heartedly the cause of international peace and disarmament, and will take any steps in their power to further this movement so far as it is consistent with the necessities of national defence.

My Ministers regard the League of Nations as a most important means of international conciliation and understanding, and will take as active a part as possible in its deliberations and work. This year, for the first time, arrangements have been made for the representation of New Zealand at the International Labour Conference under the auspices of the League.

The earnest consideration of my Ministers is being directed towards the forthcoming Imperial Conference which will be opened in London at the end of September and at which it is hoped that the Prime Minister will be able to represent New Zealand, especially in view of the importance of the constitutional and economic questions to be discussed and the magnitude of the issues involved.

Among other matters of great moment to be considered is the Report of the Experts Committee on Dominion Legislation, a copy of which will be laid on the Table, while the principal economic subject will be the consideration of ways and means to develop inter-Imperial trade. Unless negotiations can be initiated at an earlier date, it will also be necessary for my Prime Minister while in London to enter into discussions with the Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada with a view to tariff adjustments between the two Dominions.

The situation in Western Samoa has continued to cause anxiety, and the difficulties in the Territory culminated last December in an outbreak of rioting, which unfortunately was attended with fatal results. My Ministers felt it necessary to despatch H.M.S. "Dunedin" to Apia, and steps were taken to disperse the Mau and to effect the arrest of persons charged with criminal offences. The disaffected Samoans retired to the bush, but on the arrival in the Territory of the Minister of Defence they met the Administrator in his presence, and as a result of this conference all the indicated offenders were surrendered for trial. A further conference between the Administrator and chosen representatives of the Samoans has recently taken place, and the position appears to have greatly improved. My Ministers desire to reaffirm their willingness to consider any legitimate grievances that may be represented by the Samoans, but will continue to insist upon the observance of law and order in the Territory.

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

The promotion of goodwill among the nations of the world has been materially advanced by the satisfactory final settlement of the post-war question of reparations. The agreements recently made at the Hague, to which New Zealand is a party, have been ratified by the Government.

It is pleasing to note that the steps taken by my Ministers during last financial year were successful in rectifying the position of the public finances, enabling the year to be closed with a surplus of approximately £150,000.

In order to provide additional capital for carrying on the programme of public works, notably railway construction and improvement and the develop-