

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. Thursday, 4th July, 1901. Address in Reply. The Hon. the SPEAKER took the chair at half-past two o'clock. PRAYERS. ADDRESS IN REPLY. The Hon. the SPEAKER announced that, accompanied by the mover and seconder of the Address and several other members of the Council, he had waited on His Excellency

<page:63>

the Governor, and had presented to him the Address in reply to the Governor's Speech, and that His Excellency was pleased to return the following answer : - " Wellington, 4th July, 1901. "MR. SPEAKER AND HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,- "I beg to thank you for the Address you have presented, and for the renewed assurance of hearty co-operation in all matters appertaining to the ultimate development and prosperity of the people of New Zealand. " RANFURLY." The Council adjourned at three o'clock p.m. ## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. Thursday, 4th July, 1901. First Reading-Cost of Imperial Visits-Address in Reply. Mr. SPEAKER took the chair at half-past two o'clock p.m. PRAYERS. FIRST READING. Fair Rent Bill. COST OF IMPERIAL VISITS. On the motion of Mr. BARCLAY (Dunedin City), it was ordered,-That there be laid before this House three separate returns showing the cost in every department of,-(1) The visit of the Imperial troops ; (2) the visit of the Indian troops ; (3) the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York. / org/access use#cc-zero ## ADDRESS IN REPLY. ADJOURNED DEBATE. Mr. FLATMAN (Geraldine) .- Sir, it is not my intention to occupy the time of the House at any length, and I only rise because of a few hints dropped by other members, to which I would like to reply. I would like also to add my tribute to what has been already said by honourable members in expressing deep regret at the loss our Empire has sustained by the death of Her Most Gracious Majesty, and to express the joy with which we have received a visit from our future King and Queen. I am sure that much good will redound to the colony from their visit. We could have nothing that would advertise our colony so well, and I feel sure that whatever has been spent in entertaining our Royal visitors has been well spent. I hope that the returns that are asked for by some honourable members have not been asked for through a stingy or pernicious motive, and that we shall all agree that what has been spent has been done with the best of intentions. No doubt it will pay the colony in the long-run. Like others, I was very pleased to see in Christchurch City the grand review that was held there on the day of the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York to that city. I may say that the cadets in their march past did great credit to themselves and those who were in charge of them. The only fault is, as has been said before-and I repeat it now-that they ought to be equipped with better arms, and the colony could then look to them to be more efficient in the future. There is another thing, Sir, that I would like to mention, and that is the amount of land which has been bought for settlement. The land-hunger has not been nearly satisfied, and there are thousands who are ready to take up land, and I am sure that the Government will act wisely if they spend money even faster than they have done in the past in acquiring land for settlement. There is another thing that is not very clear at the present time which I would like to mention. It is in connection with a Bill passed last session, and, although it is possibly going outside the lines of the Address. in Reply, I would like to say that there are many persons who are in doubt as to how far the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act applies, and whether it applies to the farming and pastoral community or not. I think it rests very much on the way the law is construed ; and I believe it is safer for every one to insure their men than to run the risk of being sued for any loss or injury which might occur to their employés. I was very pleased indeed to hear the late leader of the Opposition. acknowledge that those on that side of the House were now all equal. I would like to ask him who

equalised them ? Nobody, Sir, but those who sit on this side of the House, and those who sent us here. We on this side of the House have had to work hard to make the Opposition acknowledge that they are now equal, and I feel certain they will acknowledge that we have had to fight hard to attain that end. We have had to pass laws practically at the point of the bayonet; but from the speech of the late leader of the Opposition (Captain Russell) I gather the fight is now over, and if those honourable gentlemen wish to shake hands with us let them do so at once, and assist to pass further Liberal legislation in the interests of the country. We will willingly hail them on our side. But I am rather afraid to trust them when I look back and find that in passing the Government Advances to Settlers Act, the Land for Settlements Acts, and also the Old-age Pensions Acts we found in them very great "snags" indeed, and it took us on this side of the House all our time and energy to pass those Acts; and I say that not one of those honourable gentlemen opposite dare go on a public platform and say that they would like to repeal either one or the other of the measures I have mentioned. They have, therefore, to thank this side of the House for levelling them up, and I hope they will continue to keep level and level-headed. I am sure the country will heartily appreciate their action, and not think it at all derogatory of them to acknowledge that they are now trying to keep on a level with this side of the House. I was very sorry indeed to hear the speech of the honourable member for Riccarton last night, and I do not know that I ought to refer to it; but perhaps it would be as well to tell that honourable gentleman that

<page:64>

I do not think his speech was appreciated by | has been in office. I say the time when the either side of the House. A great deal of it may have been very well and cleverly put together from his point of view, but I do not think it reflected much credit on him to deliver such a speech. He spoke lightly of the Premier, and was not satisfied until he brought in the subject of Court dress. Why, Sir, if any honourable gentleman goes to Christchurch he will see the honourable member for Riccarton dressed spruce and tined in the best suit of clothes and the most glossy silk hat he can possibly procure; and, if it is correct for the honourable gentleman to dress as he likes, is it not also right that the Premier should put on Court dress if he is by elevation qualified to do so? For my part, I think the honourable member for Riccarton made a mistake, and also that it is good for him and his associates that he is not permitted to put on Court dress, for I fear if once he put it on he would not take it off night or day: he would be so proud of himself in it. I hope, Sir, that we all come here this session to do the work of the year, and not to quarrel and wrangle amongst ourselves. Our friends on the other side of the House have already admitted their willingness to assist us in passing legislation in the interests of the colony; and what more can we ask of them? I am also very pleased to find that the returns from the railways have been so favourable during the past year. I feel bound, however, to say that many of our railway servants who are holding responsible positions in the service are altogether overworked. Many Stationmasters, I am informed, have to go back at night to work at their books because they have not time in the day to attend to them. I think that these men should not be expected to do that, and that we should not ask them to do more than a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. I trust, if what I have said is found to be correct, they will be relieved in some way or other. I feel convinced that there are men at our large railway-stations who are altogether overworked. I maintain that it is not in the interests of the travelling public that these men should be overworked, and so rendered less fit to do their duty. If that is allowed the travelling public may suffer in some way, which we do not care to contemplate. Therefore I hope the matter will be remedied at an early date. It has been said by honourable members who have preceded me that our rolling-stock should be all manufactured in the colony. Well, I believe that too. But where is the fault? The fault all came from that sleepy set of people the Conservatives, when they were in power. I can assure the House I am right when I say the Railway Department did not begin soon enough to manufacture rolling-stock, and therefore its requirements could not be overtaken in a few years. That is why we have had to send outside the colony for so much

rolling-stock : the simple reason is that those in power did not begin soon enough to manufacture it in the colony. An Hon. MEMBER .- The Premier has been in office for ten years. Mr. FLATMAN .- Never mind how long the Commissioners were in office, with the Conservatives in power, was the time when they ought to have commenced the manufacture of rolling-stock. At that time there was hardly any spare rolling-stock on hand, and any one with foresight ought to have seen that a block was bound to come upon us sooner or later. An Hon. MEMBER .- The Commissioners went out in 1895. Mr. FLATMAN .- It does not matter when they went out. I say they did not begin manufacturing soon enough, and if the honourable member tries to convince me they did, then he has a big task before him. Mr. MASSEY .- Why, the Government sold a lot of rolling-stock that had been manufactured by the Commissioners. Mr. FLATMAN .- Only a few old trucks that would not carry more than about 4 tons. They would have been useless by this and not fit for our railways. The Government made a very good bargain in getting rid of them. Mr. SEDDON .- And they replaced them with new stock. Mr. FLATMAN .- And, as the Premier says, they were replaced by new stock. There is one thing I am very pleased to see in the Speech from the Throne, and that is the proposed amendment of the Rating on Unimproved Values Act. I take it for granted that that amendment will make it compulsory to rate on unimproved values for all purposes, and if the amendment is not in that direction I will make one to move a further amendment, and do my best to get it through all stages. I am sure it will be satisfactory to the whole colony to know that we shall then have a system which, we are led to believe, will be equal and fair to all concerned for rating purposes. I also agree with the mover of the Address that something must be done to assist the producers in getting their products to market ; and something must be done so that the farmers can ascertain the state of the market and what is on the market-whether there is an excess or otherwise of frozen meat and lamb either in London or on the water. At present farmers have not all the information that they desire which would assist them to come to a decision as to what stock they should freeze or should hold. There are leaflets, it is true, that are circulated, but they only show what number of sheep and lambs are killed. What is wanted is to know the number of frozen carcasses which are on the manifest of every ship that leaves the colony. These numbers are telegraphed Home to those in the trade, and they know the amount afloat and in store ; but at the present time the farmers here cannot get that information, and if they had the information they would be far better able to judge of what the price was likely to be. I may here say that I have to thank the Hon. the Premier for conceding a request which I made to him during the recess, and that was that the Agent-General should telegraph the price of frozen mutton and other products as well as butter and cheese. That has been done, and I am sure the farm-

<page:65>

ing community are thankful to the Premier for having supplied that want. But if freights are to be kept up to their present extraordinary figure I think the sooner a sum of money is placed on the estimates to provide for a line of large steamers to carry our produce to the various parts of the world the better it will be for us. The honourable member for Auckland City (Mr. Napier) last night spoke mainly in the interests of the tourist traffic between Australia and this colony ; but what we want, also, is to have "ocean tramps" to take away our produce to any part of the world. We ought to, and must, have our produce carried at fair rates. Why, Sir, a large portion of the oats which have left this colony for Africa have been bought by merchants in New South Wales and Victoria, and shipped from there to the Cape. Why should not the farmers have reaped the profit which has thus gone to the middleman in Australia, and the cargoes be sent direct to the destination ? That is the direction in which I would like to see the Government go. I believe I am right in stating that the last Imperial order sent to this colony for oats was at the rate of 1s. 9d. a bushel. But what price did the farmers get ? About 1s. 3d. on an average. An Hon. MEMBER .- Whose fault was that ? Captain RUSSELL .- The Opposition. Mr. FLATMAN .- No, I did not say it was the Opposition. Captain RUSSELL .- No; but you were going to. Mr. FLATMAN .- No, I beg

your pardon. I was going to say it was through the middlemen combining and filching the farmers to that extent. The merchants ought to be satisfied with fair profits. and if they are not so satisfied, then it is the duty of the Government to assist the farmers. I am informed the true state of affairs is that the contract price was 1s. 9d. a bushel, and the farmers only got 1s. 3d. I say if we legislate for one class of the community, we should look out and see that justice is done to the others, and that is all I ask. An Hon. MEMBER. - What was the contract price ? Mr. FLATMAN .- 1s. 9d. An Hon. MEMBER .- What do the farmers get ? Mr. FLATMAN .- 1s. 3d. That is 6d. profit to the middleman, bar trifling expenses. Mr. J. ALLEN .- Who gets the 6d. ? Mr. FLATMAN .- The middlemen do. Mr. J. ALLEN .- Who were the middlemen ? Mr. FLATMAN .- You may be one, for all I know. In fact, I am rather inclined to think you are, otherwise you would not have taken the matter up so keenly. I would not be at all surprised to hear you had a good share of that profit. At any rate, I say it is not right ; and if we are to protect our people by having cheap coal and other cheap commodities, surely we have a right to look after the interests of the farmers, and while I am here I shall do so. I am also very pleased to see it is contemplated to amend the Advances to Settlers Act, and to allow lessees who hold educational reserves to obtain money on their improvements, but I am rather afraid that at the present time the lessees are neglected. I am informed that the freeholder gets more consideration than he is entitled to under the Government Advances to Settlers Act, and the Hon. the Minister who is in charge of the department will know whether I am right or not. I do not say I am, but this is the information I have received, and I want to sift the matter out. I want to see that these lessees get what is due to them. This House passed an Act which allowed the leaseholder to obtain 50 per cent. upon his improvements. An Hon. MEMBER. They will not get it. Mr. FLATMAN. - The honourable member says, " They will not get it," but I am informed that occurs in many cases where it has been recommended by the departmental officers. And there are charges or fees that these applicants have to pay when they apply for a loan, and the department pockets that, and some of those persons never get their deposit or their loan either. I say that it is not right or just when it has been recommended by those who are specially appointed by the department. I do not see why the heads of the department should ignore altogether that which has been recommended by its officials. If this is the case, I trust there will be an improvement. I am not saying that it is an absolute fact, but I say that these cases have been brought before my notice, and I have been told that they exist-I hope they will not exist in future if they have existed in the past. There is another thing I think the people of the colony can congratulate themselves upon, and that is the floating of the \$500,000 loan, and the amount that was oversubscribed in reply to the appeal ; and it must be admitted that the more money we can raise amongst ourselves the better it is for us far better than going outside the colony, even if we have to give a little more interest for it. I have no wish, Sir, to occupy the time of the House any longer, because I learn there are many honourable gentlemen who have prepared speeches before them to deliver. I had no prepared speech ; the only thing is that I wished to express myself on the few matters which I have mentioned. I trust that we shall all work harmoniously together, and that we shall have a good session, and that when we have finished we shall be able to go to our constituents and say that we thoroughly believe we have been working for the good of the colony generally. Mr. FOWLDS (Auckland City). Sir, I did not intend to speak this afternoon, believing that some of the older members of the House would have carried on the debate. I think it would be a mistake if we allowed this debate to break down in the same way that we did last year. It is very important that the proposals contained in His Excellency's Speech should be discussed, and also that reference should be made to the administration of the Government. The position we see in the House at the present time is rather a peculiar one, resulting from the announcement made by Captain Russell, late leader of the Opposition. I suppose the incident that occurred last evening is probably

unprecedented in the annals of parliamentary government. Mr. SEDDON .- It was done last session. Mr. FOWLDS. - Still, it was not done in the same definite way; and right throughout last session the Premier and other honourable members referred to the honourable gentleman as leader of the Opposition. Sir, it would now be improper to so describe the honourable member for Hawke's Bay. The position, therefore, is this : A very serious responsibility devolves on every member of this House, each having in his humble way to undertake the duties of a constitutional Opposition. Mr. MONK .- You will have an elective Executive now. Mr. FOWLDS .- Quite so, and I shall come to that presently. But I want to say that it behoves every one in this House to carefully criticize the proposals and administration of the Government in the absence of any organized Opposition. Of course, in any criticism I make this afternoon it will be understood that I give a general approval to the policy and administration of the Government, else I should not be sitting on this side of the House. Therefore I do not intend to waste much time in commending the different proposals that I approve of. I shall prefer to have it understood that where I do not criticize I generally approve. It also seems to me that since the late Opposition have abdicated their functions it will be absolutely necessary for us, as early as possible, to secure the passing of the Elective Executive Bill. I quite agree with a good deal that the late leader of the Opposition said last night about the confused state of parties and the want of definite dividing-lines. I think any one who has watched the proceedings of this House during the last few years will have seen that there is no clear line of demarcation dividing parties. Mr. MONK .- Honesty and dishonesty. Mr. FOWLDS .- I see ; and the dishonesty is on which side of the House ? Mr. MONK .- I do not say. Mr. FOWLDS. - Well, without organized opposition it seems to me there is no excuse at all for the maintenance of the old methods. I do not mean to abolish party government, because you can never have government in any other way except by party. The majority in this House on any particular question will be the party for the time being ; but I think the time has arrived when the members of the House ought to have a voice in choosing who shall be the Executive officers of Parliament, and I hope the honourable member for Waitaki will have fair treatment this year. It was rather pitiable last year to see Ministers and Whips so deliberately stonewalling - not the Elective Executive Bill, because I do not believe that even they had the courage to stonewall that Bill, but some poor little innocent that stood before it on the Order Paper. I hope this year we shall not have an exhibition of this kind, but that the measure will have a fair chance of coming forward and being considered on its merits. A few remarks were made last night by the Commissioner of Trade and Customs with reference to the converting of the Opposition and the Press. Now, there is just a possibility that both those things have come about by a departure on the part of those who at present occupy the Treasury benches from the old ideals of Liberalism that first placed them there. I think I could enumerate one or two matters that point in this direction. This is not a position to be proud of-to have converted your opponent by having gone over to his position. I take in reference to this the question that was so lengthily debated last session-the question of granting a rebate of 10 per cent. to Crown tenants. I cannot imagine for a moment that the ideals that possessed the Government and the party when they first took office were embodied in that measure. I cannot imagine any other motive that could exist for a measure so retrograde in character but to go " one better" than the proposal of the Opposition to give these tenants the freehold. The proposal of the Opposition was to sell them the freehold ; the action of the Government was to give it them for nothing by instalments. With reference to this matter, I was not in the House when the final compromise was made and the Bill passed, but I have seen written statements taken down at the time, and signed by those who acted with me, as to what was the intention of the Government and what would be done-namely, that each individual application for rebate would be considered on its merits. Now, I have been informed that this has not been done; that in some land districts the law has been interpreted that the rebate should be paid, and was paid, to every one who paid rent promptly ; in other land districts none at all was given. In Auckland I have made inquiries, and have

not found one single case where rebate was made. This clearly shows An Hon. MEMBER. - It shows it was needed in some land districts and not in others. Mr. FOWLDS .- I deny that, because there is no district in the colony where the Crown tenants have been able to sell out their leases, apart from improvements, at from \$1,500 to \$3,000 premium except in Canterbury. There they got the rebate. In the Auckland District tenants would not be able to get people to buy their leases at any price, and they got nothing. Mr. SEDDON .- Pardon me for a moment. I think the difficulty has occurred through the interpretation being that if tenants are behind-hand with their rents altogether, although they pay this year's rent promptly, they cannot get the rebate. Mr. FOWLDS .-- That does not explain the rebate being given universally in Canterbury while not in other land districts. Reference has been made to the Royal visit, and to the visit of the Imperial troops. These events have no doubt been useful in their way. I am sure it was the desire of the people of the colony to have a look at their future King and Queen, and the people of the colony have risen to the occasion and given them a right Royal reception. But, when you look back over the past two years, there has been a series of excitements, prejudicial, I think, in some respects

<page:67>

to the well-being of the people, and I hope for some time to come we shall have a rest in this respect. I am very pleased to know of the great success of the penny-postage system, but there is another postal matter which I think ought to receive attention. I represent a city constituency, and they are supposed to be the people who have derived the most benefit from the inauguration of the penny-post. I have been out visiting in the country districts in the Auckland Province, and I find the country settlers pretty generally hold that opinion, and they make a claim which I think is a just one-that their newspapers ought to be carried free. In several of the Australian Colonies newspapers are carried free within the colony, and I see no reason at all why that simple concession should not be given to the settlers in the country districts of New Zealand. The diffusion of news and information is a very important part of the education of the people, and the adoption of a free newspaper-postage would, I am sure, be a great advantage and benefit to the people of the colony. In connection with postal matters, there is the question of the San Francisco mail. The honourable member for Wellington Suburbs last night made a very bitter attack on the present service. The one-sided nature of his remarks was rather too apparent. The bias he displayed in puffing a colonial company, and depreciating the American company, was considerably overdone. We all admit that the steamers employed in the San Francisco service have not given the satisfaction which was expected of them, and it is also a fact that boats built in Britain have sometimes failed to run smoothly in the earlier stages of their running ; but measures are being taken to put these boats in a condition that will enable them to carry out perfectly the time-table arrangements that they entered into. I cannot help thinking if these steamers had been calling at Petone or Wellington, where the honourable gentleman was interested, or even at some southern ports, we should not have had the wail about their shortcomings that we had last night. I hope, in considering any future mail arrangements, the benefits of this San Francisco mail-service, both in point of speed and regularity in the delivery of mails, will be duly considered, and that no steps will be taken to cut off what is one of the oldest services in the colony, and one which has done a great deal to advance the interests of New Zealand, until a better is found to take its place. The proposal made by the honourable gentleman to give encouragement towards reviving the old Vancouver service required a good deal of audacity, in face of the previous experience of the running of that service. The honourable gentleman referred to the Frisco steamers being one, two, and three days late, but the Vancouver boats, if I remember rightly, were weeks late on some occasions, and therefore to commend that as a mail-service in preference to the Frisco mail-service was very peculiar indeed. I notice in His Excellency's Speech that it is proposed to legislate in the interests of the bank-clerks. I quite agree that bank-clerks should have similar assistance from the legislation of the

Government that other workers have; but it is possible some- times in trying to do a kindness to do harm ; and I know that some of the bank-clerks with whom I have conversed are not at all in favour of legislative interference, because they now get certain holidays which they will have to give up if they are asked to conform to legislative enactment as to hours, et cetera. Legislation of this kind very often defeats the end in view. For example, we passed last year the Workers' Compensation for Accidents Act. I received a letter the other night from a car- penter in Auckland, pointing out how that Act operated in his particular case. He had applied for a mortgage on a house he was building, and he was compelled to pay 10s. a year as insurance to the mortgagee. I consider, Sir, that charges of that kind minimise the value workers would receive from the compensation. The Govern- ment should provide means to insure the mort- gagee at a lower rate than is proposed at present, because the risk of being called upon to con- tribute is very small indeed. There is mention in the Speech of a Bill to indemnify local autho- rities for expenditure in connection with the Royal visit, and that, of course, is absolutely necessary. But I would like to point out that it seems to be wrong that local authorities should be put into a position of having to spend money illegally on an occasion of this kind, and then be at the mercy of the Government of the day for the indemnification of the expenditure. Last year we passed the Municipal Corporations Act, and yet within a few months afterwards the leading Municipalities of the colony were invited by the Government to violate that law with the idea of having an indemnity provided by this House. An Hon. MEMBER .- Some of them were coerced. Mr. FOWLDS. - "Some of them were coerced " the honourable member says. Well, leaving that alone, the question that they had to do it, and were invited to do it, shows that provision ought to be made in the Municipal Corporations Act for the City Councils taking a .poll of the ratepayers, who are the people who have to find the money, and who should have the opportunity of deciding how that money should be spent. We should leave it entirely to be decided by those who have to pay. With reference to the question of defence, and Volunteering, I have to say it was very un- satisfactory last year, and I think it has been pretty well the same every year. The capita- tion-money for the Volunteers is not paid until long after it is due. It is due on the 31st March, and this year in the Auckland District it had not been paid in June. The excuse, as far as Auckland is concerned, will, no doubt, be that some class-firing had not been carried out ; but the fact is the Volunteers there are prohibited from class-firing on the only range there is. If, therefore, Sir, it is to be said that they are to be kept out of their capitation on that account, it is an extra- ordinary position. I also hope the Government

<page:68>

will take the earliest opportunity of having a from this protective tariff. Indeed, I deny that drillshed erected at Auckland. Some months any worker can derive benefit from a protective ago the drillshed was consumed by fire, and as yet no steps have been taken to have it re- pay artificially increased prices for nearly every- erected. Unless something is done to give Auckland a drillshed very quickly I am sure that Volunteering in the district will receive a considerable check. Reference is made in the ' Speech to the earth-hunger which still exists. ment servants; and that is a very nice thing. I It is extraordinary that this should be so when i should like all servants of the Government to hundreds of thousands of acres of good land in the hands of the Government in the Auckland District are shut up and not open to settlement, and I hope something more effective will be done in the coming year in that respect. There is another matter in this connection I should like to bring before the Government. About twenty miles from Auckland there is a block of Native land extending from the Waikato Heads to Raglan, a distance of about a hundred miles by ten miles in width. It is absolutely shut up from settlement. It is under lease to a loan company, but the lease will ex- pire in three years. Surely, then, the Go- vernment can do something to satisfy the earth-hunger when they have land in great quantities like that so near a large centre of population. It could be acquired under the Land for Settlements Act, and thrown open for selection. In addition to that, there are many other parts, like the Ohura Valley, which has been spoken of, where the land, as good as

any to be found within the colony, is lying in : the hands of the Crown; it might be offered for settlement, and I hope some effective steps will be taken to open it up at an early date. I see there is a proposal to do something for the extension of the commerce of the colony, and various speakers have spoken about opening up fresh markets for our produce, and at the same time have talked of having everything produced within the colony. I want to know how it is possible to extend the commerce of the colony if everything is to be produced within the colony. If you produce goods of any kind, and send them out of the colony for sale, you must take something in return. What is it that you want to take? You say that you want everything produced within the colony. Perhaps, Sir, the answer may be that we will take gold in return. Why, gold is one of our principal products. I should like to hear some of those who speak so glibly on the question explain how it is possible to extend the commerce of the colony and at the same time pursue a policy which means the shutting - out of importations from other places. In that connection reference has been made to railway-carriages, and I believe, I abolish the monopoly on which they rest. No as a matter of sentiment, it is best to produce things of that kind in the Government : base, and, whenever you find a trust or combine workshops. But the whole of our policy has been to increase the Customs tariff, with the idea of shutting foreign goods out of the colony : and we cannot increase to any great ' death. I believe there is a universal law of extent the commerce of the colony until we alter our fiscal laws. The settlers in the country districts and a large proportion of the workers in the towns are engaged in occupations that cannot possibly derive any benefit whatever tariff, and most of them because of it have to thing they buy, while the prices of their own . products are regulated by foreign markets. In this connection also there has frequently been voiced the desire for increased pay for Government - be well paid, and many require equalisation ; but it has to be borne in mind that the pay of all public servants has to be found by the people of the colony. I know very well outside the ranks of the Civil Service it is not so easy for a man to make a good living as inside the Service, and, therefore, to increase the pay of those in the Government service is simply to set up another privileged class who will receive a remuneration higher than is received by those who provide the pay for them. With reference to the construction of railways, I am glad to see the Government recognise the necessity for proceeding rapidly with the main lines, and I hope that in the allocations for the coming year they will remember that the main line runs north of Auckland as well as south of Auckland, and in making allocations for railway construction it will be kept in view that the opening-up of the lands north of Auckland is a very important matter. There are very large quantities of good land that can never be properly opened up without the prosecution of the North Auckland Railway. I notice, also, that there is no reference in the Address this year to licensing proposals. I presume that the Government have recognised that it is a thorny subject to handle. I believe it is ; and it is better that the law should be left as it is at present rather than adopt the retrograde proposals of last year. I do not think the law is by any means perfect. There are a good many things that could be amended, but possibly in the meantime an amendment might be made in the wrong direction, and I believe the administration can be improved considerably without an alteration of the law itself. Mr. ATKINSON .- What about these removals ? Mr. FOWLDS .- Which removals ? Mr. ATKINSON .- These fraudulent removals. Mr. FOWLDS .- That is a question of administration. I notice the Government intends to undertake a big contract in reference to dealing with and controlling trusts. There is only one way to deal with trusts, and that is to trust can exist without some monopoly as in any particular branch of business, throw it open to competition, take away the shelter of the monopoly, and the trust will die a natural liberty, and if men conform with it things will go on very satisfactorily. Last year I did not feel satisfied with the passing of the Public Revenues Bill. I opposed that measure, and still think that, while some amendments were

<page:69>

\- perhaps necessary, we made a mistake in passing that Act, and also in passing the extra bonus to

members. I agree with the contention that has been made that the salaries of members ought to be raised, but I think we ought to do it in the only just and fair way—that is, to raise it at the close of one Parliament, to apply to those who come in at the next election, so that the matter might be entirely in the hands of the people, and if they do not approve of it they can elect members who will reduce it. I hope that will be the course pursued by the Government. The Speech also refers to the question of rating on unimproved values, and making a mandatory law in that respect. Personally, I believe in the principle of local option in most things; however, there is no reason why the people should be given a local option on this question any more than on the question of making petty larceny an offence. It is robbery, and nothing short of it, to collect taxes on a man's improvements, and therefore it is fair and just that the local authorities should only be given power to tax that which derives benefit from the spending of the taxes. But I hope the same principle will be carried further in the incidence of taxation. The only fair and honest way of collecting national revenue, as well as municipal revenue, is to tax land-values. The time has arrived, and I believe the sentiment of the country will support an increase of the present land-tax by 1d. in the pound. I should be very glad to give all the assistance I can in securing an advance in that direction. Then we would secure a true line of party demarcation. There we would have a principle to guide us, and the sooner we get that line of demarcation, founded on principle, the better it will be for the country.

An Hon. MEMBER .- What about the income-tax ? Mr. FOWLDS .- I have no time to enter into a discussion of an income-tax ; but there is no more reason for taxing incomes than there is for taxing improvements. If the principle of the income-tax is right - namely, that a man should pay in accordance to his ability to pay—why not apply it to every branch of the public service, and when a man wants to post a letter, or travel by the train, charge him according to his ability to pay, because those institutions are only rendering service to the people in the same way that police protection, free education, or any other service does. Unless we take some action in the direction of increasing the present land-tax, we shall presently be in the midst of one of those land booms, the prelude to another burst and period of distress. In many portions of this country land is being sold at prices altogether out of proportion to the producing capacity of the land, and nothing but an increase in the land-tax will stop the speculating in land values, and save the country from a depression such as we have had in the past. Many claims have been made as to the value of the services of the Government in giving us the prosperous times we have had during the last few years ; I believe the principal act of the Liberal party that has tended to produce prosperity in New Zealand was the abolition of the old property-tax, and the substitution of the land tax. The economic effect of that change had more to do with producing prosperity than all the other legislation that has been passed by the Government. I think I have now occupied a sufficiently long time. I hope the session on which we have entered will be productive of good work, and I hope also that we shall take care not to rush through legislation in the hurried and incomplete way that we sometimes did last session.

Mr. MCLACHLAN (Ashburton) .- Sir, I had, like other honourable members, no intention of speaking, because of an infirmity. I am suffering from a cold; but I will endeavour, if the House will permit me, to make a few remarks, which shall be as concise as possible. In common with other honourable members, I congratulate the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply. They have done their duty satisfactorily, and have shown that they can deal with important subjects. The death of the Queen is, of course, a subject to which we must make some reference. We could not help it, and we cannot help remarking that she was a good Queen. The visit of the Royal party is, in my opinion, very important, although I do not put a very great value upon Royalty itself. But it is important from the circumstances connected with the visit. The Royal party has been accompanied by the representatives of the great commercial powers of London, and by the representatives of wealth and commerce, and when those people go back to the Old Country they will say that this is the place for the investment of surplus wealth. They have travelled very nearly from the North Cape to the Bluff ; they have seen a very great part of New Zealand, and everywhere

there has been evidence of content and an absence of poverty. A country such as this, endowed as it is by Nature with all the best elements of comfort and health, must be an attractive country for investment. The general prosperity of the country is not due to the Government ! No; but probably the Government is due to the general prosperity of the country. The Govern- ment, with the exception of the Railway service and Post and Telegraph services, have nothing whatever to do with the development of the country ; and they do not interfere with it so long as they do not impose upon us what my honourable friend who has just sat down has called "restrictive legislation," that will prevent the development of the natural products of the country. They will do well if in this matter they restrain themselves ; and I hope they will restrain themselves more than they have done in the past, because they went as far as they could go to strangle native industries by the most cruel protective tariffs, which have not worked out what was expected of them. What did they do for boots? My honourable friend Mr. Tanner, a gentleman who-I do not say it disrespect- fully-represented the boot-manufacturing in- dustry, came to the House in 1895, and he was an important member of the Labour party which induced the Government to make the extraordi-
<page:70>

nary provision for an increased duty on boots of 5 per cent. I say that in consequence of the pro- tection granted at that time-2} per cent. and other advantages-under what was called the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, the boot trade is languishing in this colony. I am inclined to agree with the member for Auckland City, Mr. Fowlds, that it would be far better to send to America, or Great Britain, or somewhere else, and get our boots, and let these people cultivate the waste lands in Auckland which are now waiting labourers to till them. In His Excel- lency's Speech I noticed gladly that the Govern- ment have not only made an attempt, but they have proceeded a considerable distance in the direction of forming relationships with out- side markets for our products. New Zea- land has got enormous capabilities and great potentialities of production, and certain classes of our produce cannot be produced to the same extent and quality in other parts of the world. For instance, there are our great dairy products. Leaving aside wool and mutton, there is no doubt that the butter and cheese and dairy products of the colony are of the utmost importance-in fact, of al- most more importance than any other products we have. You can exploit the goldfields, and, in fact, I think I heard the Premier say years ago that the goldfields on the West Coast were nearly worked out then. At any rate, they are not now making any very great development. But look at the butter production of Taranaki, and, in fact, of the whole of the North Island. There is the district, for instance, around Strat- ford, and the land through which it is proposed to take a branch railway, which line, I believe, will run past the property of the honourable member representing the district. That line will enormously enhance the value of the land through which it passes. The result will be that in a short time the export of butter from that district will be very largely increased-in fact, it is impossible to fix a limit for the in- crease of our dairy industry. The honourable member for Riccarton made an onslaught on the Government in connection with the rail. way rolling- stock. That honourable gentle- man lives in Christchurch, although he re- presents a suburban district which has, I understand, a few onion- and potato-growers in it, but more lunatics, and he complains of the deficiency in our rolling-stock. Whether the fault lies with the Railway Commissioners, or with the late Minister for Railways, Mr. Cad- man, I do not know ; but it may have been in consequence of the House not supplying the necessary funds for the purpose of obtaining the rolling-stock. I have, however, to give another reason for the deficiency in our rolling-stock, and that is the extraordinary development in the agricultural industry in consequence of the land-for-settlements policy in Canterbury and elsewhere. Members who represent cities like Wellington, such as where the produce can be taken about almost in wheelbarrows, know no necessity for an increase in the rolling-stock. But if you travel from the Bluff right on to Hurunui, and along any of the branch lines, you will find that months after the harvest has been threshed out it is stacked under tarpaulins for the want of trucks. When the farmers saw a heavy harvest approaching, the only

consolation was that the Government had recently ordered some hundred and odd trucks which were likely to be available to convey their produce to market. The circumstances attending ordinary agricultural farming are very different now from the time when I started farming. At that time there were very few threshing-machines. They were not capable of putting through the same quantity of stuff as they are now. Our roads were bad, and only one-half the stuff was threshed in the time, and the quantity of produce was only a fraction of what it is now ; consequently, there was no big rush to get the stuff to market. But in a short time these machines came in, and they thresh the whole of the grain in a very short time, and it is stored down at Lyttelton. That is the reason why the farmer wants to see trucks provided ; and I yield to no man in the desire to see the manufactures of this colony fully employed, especially when required to manufacture what is required by the Government for railways or other public works. Now I am going to refer to the honourable member for Riccarton again. I am certain he was zealous in his remarks last night, because no one could think for a moment that he was not sincere in what he said. Honourable members who were here a few years ago will remember that no one championed the acquisition of land more than the honourable member for Riccarton. I have the advantage of being a member of the Land Board, and I know what people apply for, and they apply for land in quarter-acre sections just as often as they do for the larger areas. A quarter-acre section is as much as a working-man can manage if he is to do justice to himself. My honourable friend was a small farmer himself at one time, and I believe he made a big hit in growing some early potatoes ; but, Sir, in his desire to find employment for the great mass of struggling humanity he would like to abolish all labour-saving machines and employ only manual labour in the production of root-crops. Now, around the City of Christchurch the Government have in their wisdom acquired several estates, and I think up till now they do not yield 4 per cent., and some of them did not pay 2 per cent. Over and above that, I contend that the Government acted in an immoral manner in buying sections with their cheap money, and cutting them up. In doing this they are competing with the private owners who have to pay land-tax upon their properties. There is not plenty of land in places where the population is congested, such as Wellington and Dunedin; but round about the suburbs of Christchurch, where there are any number of paddocks of land ready to be cut up when the people are ready to take it up, I do not think it is necessary. If you put people on five-acre sections, why, you will have to get aerial railways to carry them in to their work. People who live in cities must live close ; you cannot expect men to live in the heart of

<page:71>

a large town and have a farm. Now, Sir, the Hon. Sir Joseph Ward is not present, and I will say here that I was exceedingly pleased- in fact, more than pleased, I was overjoyed- when I saw that he got the title which he richly deserves. I will not compare his title with the titles which have been given sometimes in this colony, as, for instance, on the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee, and with which the Premier of this colony had no more to do than I had. Sir Joseph Ward has been the greatest postal and telegraph reformer in the Southern Hemisphere. I remember that, ever since he came into this House, he has always identified himself with postal reforms. Therefore I hope the honourable gentleman and his wife will long live to enjoy the title. I do not know whether the question I am about to refer to is mentioned in the Governor's Speech-I never read it-but I saw that the report of the Federation Commission was laid on the table yesterday. I, for one, am exceedingly pleased that the Government was wise enough to select the right men to bring in that report. I am sure nothing could have pleased me better. If the Premier had put on some strong Federationist on that Commission. and the Commission had brought in a report with even a suggestion that there was any reason for us to favour federation, I should have been extremely disappointed. Now, Sir, my honourable friend the member for Geraldine referred to the over-worked railway employés, and to a number of questions discussed by previous speakers. I should just like to warn him that it is not always wise to court popularity. He spoke about these overworked railway

workmen. I wish the Minister for Railways were here, because that is a serious charge to bring against the Hon. the Minister for Railways. The honourable gentleman said that he allows his half-white slaves to be ground down. An Hon. MEMBER .- Quite true. Mr. MCLACHLAN. - "Quite true!" It is easy for a city member to pander to the tastes of a few men. Now, Sir, I represent a few railway workmen, and I have never heard any- thing of the kind. The only favour I am ever asked for is to get their sons and daughters into the railway workshops-into the railway employment. I am plagued, I might say, because I cannot get them all in. I would do it if I could, but I am deluged with applications to get them into this overworked branch of the service. I say it is nothing of the kind. On the contrary, it is the best branch in the service for the working-men of the colony. They are in regular employment, and they get privileges that no other workmen get. They get railway commutation tickets for themselves and their wives and families ; they get holidays on full pay. Why, not long ago, when some of the troopers were returning, the Hon. the Minister for Railways gave them three days' holiday on full pay ; and yet the honourable member for Geraldine talks about their hard lot. An HON. MEMBER. -- What about the Station- masters ? Mr. MCLACHLAN .- I notice they never try to get out of their billets ; they stick to them \- like a burr to a sheep's back. I heard it suggested that honourable members, in discussing this Address in Reply, should keep as closely as possible to the text of His Excellency's Speech. I noticed how carefully the honourable member for the Suburbs stuck to the text. He darted straight away into the question of the Oceanic service, and dwelt on the excellence of the steamers of the Union Company ; and if it had not been for the honourable member for Auckland City (Mr. Napier), who followed him and dispelled the delusion the honourable member had cast over me in regard to the magnificent sailing fleet of the Union Steamship Company, I should have been deceived. It was a terrible revelation to me. The honourable member for Auckland City even went so far as to say that the boat I look upon as the best and most comfortable I ever travelled on in my life-the "Mararoa "-is an old tub. He said that two friends who travelled with him on the " Mara- roa " for the three or four days' passage from Australia to Auckland expressed regret that they had ever come to the colony, because they had been in misery during the three or four days they were on this miserable steamship " Mararoa." Well, I do not want to see that sort of people come out here ; people who grumble at being for three days on the "Mararoa " are not the right sort of people to have in this colony. Speaking of the elective Executive, I think the honourable member for Waitaki is entitled to at least the gratitude of a great number of people who have advanced Radical views. Previously I voted against the measure, but if ever I get the opportunity again I shall vote for it. I think, if the elective Executive were the law now, the Premier, unless he were translated to a higher sphere, would still be elected to his present position in the Cabinet. In regard to the Crown Tenants' Rebate Bill, which has been alluded to by the honourable member for Auckland City (Mr. Fowlds), I consider it to be the most scandalous piece of legislation that ever was passed. When it was proposed last session most honourable members who are fairly level-headed took exception to it, and the Premier, with that facility he has for drawing a red-herring across the scent, led us to believe that he had met us in every way ; in fact, I was one of the obstructionists ; I went away home to have a sleep to refresh myself, and to restore myself to my usual vigour, and when I came back to the House the honourable member for Dunedin City, Mr. Barclay, told me the Premier had agreed to some compromise, and I was to go and see him. I went and saw him, and he said, " Yes, yes, that is all right, John." I said, " Mr. Seddon, what we want is that the Land Board should have power to examine into every individual place, and, on their recommendation, with the consent of the Minister, a rebate or a remission of rents should be made ; that would meet cases I know of that have come under the review of the Canterbury Land Board." He said, " No, I won't have a Minister in it; I tell you-it is not a Cabinet secret-if I put the Minister in, and the Board does not

<page:72>

agree, they will say it is because the applicant is not of the 'right colour'; if they did agree, it would be

because the applicant is of the 'right colour'; I want to keep clear of any charge of corruption of that sort, and I will put in the Commissioner of Crown Lands and the Receiver of Land Revenue." I knew both of these gentle men to be most incapable men for such a position. Then, again, no two Land Boards interpret the Act the same; and our officer in Canterbury sent up to the Law authorities, or some other person, to ask for a free translation of this clause in the Act. They sent down to say that they were not there to make a translation ; they said, "You have to administer the Act according to your own interpretation." The Commissioner was away in Auckland, and the Receiver of Land Revenue had nobody to con- fer with. so he conferred with me, and I said, " To be safe, you had better give it to every one." This will show what a ridiculous piece of legislation we placed on the statute-book. Mr. SEDDON. - Then, you are responsible for it. Mr. MCLACHLAN. - I admit that ; but my shoulders are broad. There has been an enor- mous amount of money involved, and a return has been moved for by the honourable member for Egmont of the amount that has been given in rebate. But there are no hard-up men who get the 10 per cent. It is only the men who can sell out their good-will for a capital value, even in the case of poor land, of 30s. an acre. I know of a case in Canterbury where a man sold the good-will of his place for \$1,800 ; but he got more than that- that is the amount he paid duty on. Mr. SEDDON. - A very good argument in favour of periodical revaluation. An Hon. MEMBER. - The Premier is coming #cc-zero to our side. Mr. MCLACHLAN. - The Premier is coming on, but I do not know whether he will ever reach it. I know of many such cases; and my honourable and learned friend Mr. Mere- dith also knows of such cases as well as I do. He knows that such cases are so bad and glaring that he, more especially on our Board, objects to people getting large sums for their good-will, and yet these people get 10 per cent., and capi- talised 10 per cent., and the man who walks out does so a small millionaire. I am now going to enter into a subject that contains a good deal of debatable matter in it, and that is the matter of the oat contracts. The honourable member for Geraldine says that the contract price was 1s. 9d. per bushel. Mr. FLATMAN. - I said I was given to un- derstand that. Mr. McLACHLAN. - That is a matter we have nothing to do with. If any commercial firm makes a contract in pursuit of their busi. ness, what have we to do with them ? The more they get the better ; but I know of oats having been bought at Ashburton for 1s. 4d. in large sacks, and they had to be rebagged into small sacks and railed to Christchurch and put on board. These men had to take the responsi. bility. They have to buy the oats in anticipation ; Mr. McLachlan and if it had not been for the oat contracts the farmers would have been poorer than they are, and we ought to be pleased that this contract- the largest ever given by the Imperial authori- ties-was placed in this colony. The honourable member for Auckland City (Mr. Fowlds) wishes the benefits of free newspaper postage extended to the people of Auckland suburbs- he wishes the newspapers delivered free ; but I think he ought to go a little further than that. An Hon. MEMBER. - Deliver them also some one to read. Mr. McLACHLAN. - More than that. There is an article of daily consumption which is almost indispensable to babies, and that is milk, and I think milk ought to be delivered free also. It ought to be carried free by the railway authorities just in the same way as the postal authorities are asked to deliver the newspapers free. With regard to the down-trodden working- man, who it is stated has to pay such an enormous proportion of the duties imposed by the Customs, I am afraid the honourable gentle- man who made that remark does not know how the poor people live. Now, I contend that everything we eat and drink, and which we pay Customs duty on, ought to be free. Beef, mutton, pork, fowls, ducks, geese, turkeys, eggs, butter, cheese, milk, flour, oat- 4.30. meal, and barley, all are free. There is not a penny of duty charged on them. I think, therefore, the honourable gentleman was entirely wrong in what he said about the duties. For myself, I would like to see all duties removed, and I trust the Colonial Treasurer, when dis- tributing his surplus, will, at any rate, keep steadily in view the necessity of further reduc- ing the duties on the necessities of life-those necessities of life that we cannot produce for ourselves in the colony. Mr. STEVENS (Manawatu). - Sir, I have to congratulate both the mover and the seconder of the Address in

Reply on the speeches they made to this House. I think it is very necessary that the people of the country should know what is being done in Parliament for the benefit of the country ; and if it were not that we have that useful publication called Hansard, through which the people get their information, I am sure they would be ignorant on many points of policy which very materially affect their welfare. Before proceeding further, Sir, let me say that it affords me great pleasure to be able to congratulate the Government on the measures they have succeeded in passing during the last few years for the benefit of the country. It also affords pleasure to be able to congratulate the Government on having passed measures which, as the honourable member for Ashburton remarked, have done much to level the Opposition party to a point from which they may see there is at least some good in the Government that for many years they have opposed. I am sure every person in the nation to which we are proud to belong will join with the people of this colony in offering their condolence to His Majesty the King on the death of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, one of the best queens who has ever sat upon

<page:73>

the Throne. I am sure, Sir, we have every confidence for our dairy produce or 2d. a bushel more for confidence that her successor will, as far as possible, our grain which we export there than if we sible, endeavour to carry out the good government were not federated with them ? Most certainly of the nation over which he rules ; and it must not. have been exceedingly gratifying to the people of the colony to have a visit from the Duke the way. and Duchess of Cornwall and York. There are many people, Sir, who are under the impression upon political economy, John Stuart Mill, I believe, has informed us that it is the consumer sion that the expenditure of the country on account of that visit has been too great. They who pays the duty, and not the producer. say the money should have been expended on making roads, and on other local works. Roads can be made, and the local requirements Mill is wrong, and the honourable member is right. Let me say this : In favourable seasons can be carried out; but at the same time the great point, to my mind, is that we should they will not require our products, but will be keep ourselves as closely in touch with the competitors with us in other parts of the world outer world as possible, and as favourably in similar products to those which we export ;. as possible ; and if we cannot join hand-in- and when they have unfavourable seasons- hand with our fellow-countrymen across the when they have droughts-they will then require our products ; and if they are going to impose seus for the purpose of maintaining the duties on our produce for the purpose of doing Empire, and showing that we are in every an injustice to their own people, I would be respect true and loyal British subjects, then I exceedingly sorry for them. Why, what would fear we would require to federate with Aus- our position be if we federated with Australia ? tralia. But, as we stand, I consider that the We would have a one-seventh voice in the expenditure in the matter of the cost of the Commonwealth Parliament. Assuming, for ex- Roval visit to this colony is-if it were for no ample, that there were seven States, and forty- other purpose than the mere purpose of adver- tising this country among the other countries nine representatives, we would have one-seventh of the voice, and we are so far distant from of the world money well and profitably ex- pended. There is no question, to my mind, the mainland of Australia that, to my mind, there could not be that community of interest Sir, that so long as we hold the pessimistic idea which should exist in a Commonwealth. No, of keeping ourselves isolated, and refusing to Sir, I am pleased indeed to know that there expend any money except such as is to be ex- pended about our immediate homes, and on our is no intention on the part of this colony to federate. The one strong argument used by immediate public works, we shall not succeed. Who was it made such large sums of money ? those strong Federationists was that we should Who was it became millionaires ? And why did , federate if only for the purpose of defence. Why, Holloway and Eno make such large fortunes ? Sir, the argument cannot possibly hold water, Was it not because they expended millions of inasmuch as if we wish to defend ourselves money per annum in their advertising ; and if we shall be very well able to defend our shores they had not expended this money

they would with the army of Volunteers we are likely to. not have become known. I say it is essential have for the future, and we are already federated that we should advertise ourselves as well and not only with Australia but with the Empire favourably as possible, consistently, of course, in the matter of our defence, and what we require to do is to contribute our fair and proper with a reasonable expenditure. Now, Sir, we have just had placed before us the report of the share, as I hope this colony will do, towards the Royal Commission which was set up for the ; maintenance and increasing cost of the British purpose of ascertaining whether or not this , fleet in the Southern Hemisphere. Yes, the colony should federate with the Commonwealth | defence we require is to have the high roads of of Australia, and I, as a New-Zealander, am i the sea kept open, so that the produce of this. pleased to know that that report has been un- { country can be sent to the markets of the world favourable to our associating ourselves or to : without any interference from any foreign navy ; our federating with the Commonwealth. While and so long as we look upon that as being one in Australia I had the opportunity of con- of the most important features, and one of the versing with a number of leading public men ! strongest connecting-links between the Mother- there, and I was not at all astonished to find : country and Australia and New Zealand, we that they were feverishly anxious to know why will be doing that which is just and most neces- New Zealand did not federate. Why, Sir, I sary for our own benefit and for that of the consider that if New Zealand were to federate with Australia we would be doing ourselves . posed Federation; because Australia has only at present federated by name-they have not a very great injury. Not that the people of Australia are not of the same kith and kin .vet adjusted the financial basis upon which as ourselves, but the very situation of their Had we federated at the time Federation oc- country and the climatic differences are so curred, we would have been asked to do -what, great that I am sure New Zealand would have everything to lose and nothing to gain. ; Sir? Why, to open our mouths and shut our For this reason : If we were to federate, could , eyes and see what they would give us. Yes, it be supposed for one moment that the people of Australia would give us 3d. per pound more | toms duties and our post and telegraph revenue Mr. MASSEY .- There would be no duties in Mr. STEVENS .- Well, the highest authority Mr. MASSEY .- No; not always. Mr. STEVENS .- Well, then, John Stuart Empire. Why, Sir, at present it is only a pro- the several separate States shall be placed. that is what would have happened. Our Cus-
<page:74>

would have fallen in hotch-potch with the general revenue of Australia, and we would have had doled out to this colony that which Aus- tralia might consider we were entitled to. The influence of seven members amongst forty-nine would not have been, in my opinion, sufficient to get justice or a proper or adequate return for the large sums we would contribute towards their Commonwealth funds. I am more than pleased to know that we have not one-fourth- no, not one-eighth-of the community of New Zealand who believe we are going to benefit by making an alteration in the good Constitution which we at present enjoy. It is gratifying also to know that the initiation of the Pacific cable has become a solid fact, because the greater facilities we have for communication with other countries the greater will be our pro- sperity. The Premier and Sir Joseph Ward are entitled to the thanks of the people of this country for what they have done in that matter. Although there were sneering and jeering re- marks made about those two gentlemen with respect to the positions they have attained, I think there is no one more entitled to the distinctions which have been given for public ser- vices rendered than they are-men who have done so much for the advancement of the in- terests of the colony. It is deplorable that any member of the House of Representatives should have cast such opprobrious epithets as the mem- bor for Riccarton did last night against the Pre- mier. I am sorry the honourable member is not in his place; but he has lived in a glass house, and probably does so at this moment, and I think it is improper that one who lives in a glass house should throw stones. It does not conduce to his own safety. Let me say that the Premier has never distributed his visiting-cards to strange ladies in a railway-carriage. No, Sir, he has a higher regard and a

higher respect for himself than that. The Premier has never had his respectability estimated at the value of 2d. by twelve of his fellow-countrymen as jurors. An Hon. MEMBER .- The Government Whip. Mr. STEVENS .- Does the honourable member think because I am a Government Whip that my freedom has been affected ? I am as free as any other honourable member, and I intend to be so. There is one very important question that is necessary to be dealt with in this debate, and I am very sorry indeed that a great many members have not taken the matter up, and that is the question of land settlement-the acquisition of land for settlement. I know there is no difficulty whatever in acquiring land. Land can be acquired in many districts. Take my own district, for example. There are large blocks of very good land indeed -some of the best land in the colony-which have been for sale for some time, and at prices which I am sure it would pay the Government to give. People are crying out for land. There are some six large schools in the electoral district which I have the honour to represent, and during the last twenty years there have been thousands and thousands of children educated there. With what result ? With the result that they have to leave the place when they have attained their manhood and womanhood, because it is impossible for them to acquire land upon which to make their homes in the neighbourhood where they were born and educated. I hope the Government will take into consideration the necessity of acquiring some of those large estates for close settlement. There is no necessity for compulsion, so far as I know, and the land is most suitable for occupation in small areas. Good settlers are now compelled to leave the locality, because they cannot obtain land upon which to establish their homes. And as for the statement made by the honourable member for Riccarton about a quarter-acre being too small, why, Sir, a quarter of an acre of land is sufficient for any workman, in my opinion, if it is really good land. It is sufficient for a kitchen-garden for one family. And in the locality of Christchurch, of which the honourable member speaks, if you were to cut up land into five, or ten, or fifteen, or twenty-acre sections, as he has suggested as a settlement for those persons who are employed in the cities and who require nothing except fresh air, plenty of vegetables, and a healthy locality for their families to reside in, instead of being huddled up in back garrets in towns, it would be a good thing. Now, Sir, with regard to the rebate of } per cent. upon all Government leaseholds where the rent is paid regularly, I agree largely with the honourable member for Ashburton, who says that it is the person who has been successful, and the person who has been enabled to sell out his property at a large profit, who gets the benefit of this }-per-cent. reduction. There are many instances in which the rent is not paid regularly because of sickness, and for many other reasons over which the tenant has no control. There are cases where it is because of their own personal neglect ; but I am happy to say, from my long experience on the Land Board in Wellington, that there are very few cases indeed where it is caused by personal neglect. I know there are instances where great hardship has arisen, and I think it is in those instances more especially that relief should be given. It is the \----- policy of the Government to help the deserving poor, at any rate, and I am quite sure that if the Act could be altered in that direction it would be of considerable service - although I voted for and supported the Act which allows a rebate of } per cent. of rent, when regularly paid. There has been something like a slur cast upon public men of this country : because they happen to be members of the House of Representatives, or act on Land Boards, they are said not to be entitled to express an opinion as to whether there should be a rebate or not. Why, Sir, is the fact of an honourable gentleman receiving £1 per diem - if he were on a Commission, or receiving his honorarium-going to influence his mind, in any degree whatever, as to the justice or otherwise of spending public money in a certain groove ? If so, then any person who would be so actuated would hardly be worthy of a seat in this Legislature. No, I think members should have that stigma taken away from them-the assertion that members are not

<page:75>

to be trusted, according to the law as it stands, | the present moment. But, Sir, be that as it to express an opinion in the same way as I may, there is this fact that I wish the country those who are not members of

this House. I | to understand, and that I wish the Government think, Sir, it would be well if the Government took into consideration the necessity of altering the Act in the direction of at least allowing members of this Chamber, and members of the Legislature of New Zealand, to be as free from stigma as are their brethren who are not mem- bers of Parliament. Now, with respect to the question of the oats contract, where it has been stated that 1s. 3d. per bushel was given to farmers for oats, and that the contract price was 1s. 9d. Why, Sir, the honourable gentle- man who made that statement had quite for- gotten to arm himself with all the facts and details in connection with it. He has only stated one side of the case. Let us assume, for example, that 1s. 3d. was given for oats one hundred miles from the port of shipment. They would have to be delivered probably f.o.b. at 1s. 2d. - the honourable member did not say whether it was 1s. 3d. at the barn, or where it was ; but my impression is clearly this : that the 1s. 3d. did not include wharfage, or carriage, or storage, or railage. An Hon. MEMBER .- It did not include re- bagging. Mr. STEVENS .-- And it did not include re- bagging and so forth; so that when a bald statement of that kind is made in this House, and it goes forth to the country, the people at once say, "I read it in Hansard that such-and- such a state of affairs occurred, and that the Government are to blame." I am quite sure that the honourable member who made this statement made it in all good faith, with the idea of giving the very best possible information that he could to the people of this country. Sir, when information is proffered in that way it should be accurate, and it should give the fullest possible details, so that there may be no misapprehension and no injustice done to honourable gentlemen who desire to supply their constituents, or the people of this colony, with information which they believe to be valuable to them. There is another question which has been touched upon in the Speech from the Throne, and that is the question of the Natives. It is very gratifying indeed for us to know that the Maori people in this country are increasing in numbers. It was extremely gratifying to me to see the mag- nificent gathering of that noble race at Rotorua on the occasion of the Royal visit. There is nothing which cheered the hearts of the Na tives, I think, more than to know that their efforts there to please were so highly appre- ciated not only by their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, but by the public generally. But let me say that, after all the legislation we have passed during many years, I fear we have not yet gone suffi- ciently far in the right direction. I hope that such a state of things as now exist will be materially altered. I speak with some diffidence in this matter, because I know I have been twitted with being a Maori doctor and Native land-shark in years past, though not perhaps at more particularly to understand, and that is that there are families of half-caste children who are good desirable settlers, there are Natives them- selves who would make good desirable settlers, and who wish to establish their own 50. individual homes on their own particu- lar properties, but are not given the facilities to enable them to do so. I know of a dozen instances, and more, where the Natives have said, "This is our land, we wish to have it cut off, erect our houses, our fencing, fell our bush, make our improvements, and become Euro- peans. Will the Government enable us to do this ? Will the Advances to Settlers Board ad- vance us the required sum as they would to Europeans ? " Now, in no instance have I known that to be done ; and therefore, if these people are to go on year after year without being able to make their homes, how can it be wondered at that they are dissatisfied-that many of them are dissatisfied ? Now, I en- tirely agree with the great wish on the part of the Government to do all they consider neces- sary for the advancement and future welfare of the Natives, and that desire, I am sure, is as sincere on the part of the Native Minister and the Premier as one could wish for. But what is lacking, in my opinion, is the practical way to enable the Natives to achieve that which they de- sire and should be assisted to attain ; and there- fore I am as sure as possible that unless some- thing be done in this direction there will be a continuation of that which has been a very great injustice-not intentionally but unwittingly, no doubt-to a number of Natives who are as good settlers as it is possible to find in the country. And, now that the Natives are on the increase, nothing would tend more to the prosperity of this country, or to the future prosperity of the North Island especially,

than permitting these Natives to settle on their land and have the same facilities for financing as the Europeans. Wherever the security is perfectly good, if the Government enabled that to be done it would be a step in the right direction, and would enable the people who inherit the soil to remain on the soil and become cultivators and producers. Now, Sir, it is not my intention to occupy the time of the House longer than to say, with respect to those: honourable gentlemen who sit on the Opposition benches, that I am not here for the purpose of offering them advice; I am not here for the purpose of taking exception to what they deem to be right ; but I do think you may turn up the history of any Parliament in the world and not find so many honour- able gentlemen, - said to represent consti- tutions, - that have sat so silently and so long, thereby earning the title cast on the supporters of the present Government by a former pro- minent member of this House when he spoke of them as " dumb dogs." Where are the " dumb dogs " now ? Is that the way those honourable gentlemen expect to get the very best of legisla- tion ? Why do they not in the usual way stand forward and say, "Few we be, but strong we

<page:76>

are; and we are going to criticize, in every way we think proper or necessary, the Government measures as they are brought down "? And surely, Sir, when the debate on the whole policy of the Government is proceeding, this is the time for them to speak ! I am astonished- I sit down utterly astonished-at the honourable gentlemen who have now assumed the role of "dumb dogs," instead of doing their duty as His Majesty's Opposition. Mr. HOGG (Masterton) .- Mr. Speaker, I feel in a great difficulty, because I am called upon to participate in a debate, and I want to know whether this can really be called a debate. Who am I following ? We have had this afternoon the Liberal member for Auckland City, Mr. Fowlds, the Liberal member for Ashburton, Mr. McLachlan, and following that gentleman we have just heard the Liberal member for Mana- watu, Mr. Stevens. I am called upon to follow those honourable gentlemen without having anything to denounce or demolish. I want to know what has become of the Opposition ? An HON. MEMBER. - Gone. Mr. HOGG .- There is very little doubt of that. When I look across the table and see those benches comparatively empty, desolate, and dumb I feel at a great disadvantage. These once historic, but now almost deserted, benches a few years ago were occupied by some of the most prominent men in the country ; men who attained an honourable position, because, not- withstanding all their Conservative tendencies, they were giants in debate. Mr. WILFORD .- Question. Mr. HOGG .- There is no question about it. Men like Sir John Hall ; men such as the Hon. Mr. Rolleston, a representative as superior to the man whosucceeded him as day is to night ; a man who never endeavoured to lower the tone use#cc-zero of debate, but always gave it an elevating im- petus. I say that men like these were a credit to the country, and likewise to the Opposi- tion. But what have we now ? An Opposition still, but an Opposition without a head. I do not say we have an Opposition without ability and intelligence. I believe the honourable gentlemen have brains in abundance, but why do not they use them ? Can they be said to do so if they do not give expression to their thoughts? What is the attitude of the mem- bers of the Opposition this afternoon ? I feel forlorn and sad when I look around and miss my accustomed friend and familiar political foe the late member for Wairarapa An Hon. MEMBER .- He is not dead yet. Mr. HOGG .- No; and possibly he might come back even if he were dead; but I feel almost like the American tramp who was found shedding tears at the roadside. He was asked what was the matter, and he said, " Look at the world to-day. What has become of Shake- speare ? Where is Hood ? Poor Tom Moore ? Where are such men as Shelley and Browning, and the other poets? Why, the world is not worth living in ; we have lost them all, and there is no one to hold companionship with a man like me." I do not like beating the air, and that is what I fear I should have to do if I attempted to attack the Opposition. Virtually we have no Opposition to fight against, and I believe the fact has given a depressing and dreary tone to the debate. A debate is useless and worthless unless there is plenty of force and vitality, and electricity; but where there is nothing to rub against you cannot possibly have that vitality and that interest that is essential to the

proper discussion of public questions. I say, Sir, this House is not doing its duty, and the members of the Opposition are not doing their duty, if they refrain from fighting in the interests of those who sent them here to represent them. Nothing, Sir, would give me more pleasure than to see the Opposition resuscitated. The value of our legislation depends greatly on having a vigorous Opposition. For myself, I have no grudge against the members opposite. I like to meet an opponent, because I know it is only by threshing out measures of importance that we can develop true progress. But it is undoubtedly a most lamentable state of affairs when we find in the Parliament of a young country like this, where there has been so much progress of late years, the Opposition becoming almost defunct. Sir, I call upon those who remain, small in number though they be, and notwithstanding that misfortune after misfortune has befallen them, to rally their forces, appoint a leader, and endeavour to meet the members on this side of the House in vigorous political combat. Constant agitation is essential to the healthy lifeblood of our young nation, and I call on the Opposition to do their duty to the country. If it were not for my loyalty to the Government—a loyalty that has not wavered, and will never waver as long as they carry out the views of a majority of the people of this country—I would like to have a set-to with Ministers; but I cannot consistently do that. I am not, I trust, like the honourable member for Riccarton. I do not care to dance from one side to another. I do not believe in rail-riding, nor do I believe in railing at men and manners. Hence, I am in the curious predicament of having to enter into a debate with little or nothing to condemn or fairly criticize. Looking at the Speech from the Throne, on which we are expected to express our opinions, I have to say, much as it goes against my grain to be simply adding praise to praise, that I cordially indorse almost the whole of the sentiments it contains. The loyalty of the Parliament and the people of New Zealand is given utterance to in choice and felicitous language. Expression, sympathetic and sincere, is also given to the voice of a bereaved nation over the loss of a loved Sovereign. This is followed by a fitting reference to the new King. Then, the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York is referred to. That visit, Sir, has enabled New Zealand to display herself in holiday attire. I have not had the pleasure of fully contemplating the extent of the decorations and festivities in the Australian Colonies, but I venture to say that New Zealand and the people of New Zealand have nobly done their duty in paying due homage to the son of their ruler.

<page:77>

I feel assured that the decorations and the festivities proving themselves more than equal to any class festivities here were quite equal to anything that of colonists that has been planted in any part of our visitors have witnessed in any other part of the world. Now, Sir, while we may not be pre-His Majesty's dominions. It is true that the I trust we shall always continue to live on the visit was made at a most unfortunate time, in most friendly terms with our cousins across the the dead of our winter; but, notwithstanding that, I think the illuminations in the City of sea, and that in matters of commerce and in the Wellington, and also in Auckland, have been of such a character as to reflect the greatest credit there is to be any rivalry at all, it will be a rivalry of the most friendly description. Sir, on the people of this country. We may say, in the language of Shakespeare, war in South Africa, and, Sir, I am exceed- Now is the winter of our discontent Made glorious summer by the Duke of York. Fitting allusion is also made in the Address not merely the continuance of that war, I to the birth of the Australian Commonwealth. In common, I believe, with nearly the whole of deeply regret that such a war was ever commenced. I deplore, Sir, the destruction of life the members of this House, I am pleased that the ghost of federation has been effectually laid, and, I hope, laid for a considerable number of great theatre. I regret that wiser counsels years, by the report of the Commission that has have not prevailed in the past. I consider been investigating this matter. Having spent & and under no ordinary provocation, should considerable number of years in some of the Australian Colonies myself, I think I am in a ever be forced at the point of the bayonet. position to form a fairly correct view as to the advisability or otherwise of joining those colonies all the destruction of life and

property, all the and becoming a portion of that Commonwealth. fearful calamities that have overtaken thousands But I have never from the first entertained the slightest doubt that a more inadvisable step than to link our destinies with those of the have been avoided. But, while I speak in that Colonies of Australia ; to sink our individuality and to sacrifice our autonomy as a self-govern- ing colony, free and independent, would have been one of the greatest mistakes that could possibly have been made by this country. We the innocent and unoffending are not them- will, no doubt, be able to receive tourists from the Australian Colonies from time to time, and I trust that the friendship that now exists between that are giving a crimson tinge to modern history escape unscathed-I must admit that I New Zealand and the Australian Colonies will long continue. We have already had, again feel exceedingly pleased at what our boys have and again, visitors from those colonies, men of achieved over there: at the valour, courage, and readiness they have displayed, the assist- erudition, statesmen and others, who have come here for the purpose not merely of viewing our ance they have given to the British arms, and colony, but also of seeing and studying our : the way they have maintained the best tradi- tions of the Empire. If I am sorry for anything methods. Some of them have not been slow to more than another it is that we are not able to copy our legislation and to adopt systems that welcome every one of them back to the colony We had the courage to introduce. Most of our again. Leaving that subject and dealing with important legislation, although regarded by another that has been touched upon in the many as dangerously experimental, has turned Address -- that of the coal-mines-I may say I out of the greatest value to ourselves, and our am exceedingly pleased that the Government Australian friends are now realising the advan- are seriously contemplating at last the experi- tages of these reforms. They are free and at ment of working a mine by the State. Of liberty to make any use they may think fit of that I have been an advocate for many years. the example that we are setting here in the I have failed to understand, Sir, where the matter of new legislation; and I am pleased, State is such a huge consumer, why it should for one, to see that they are honouring us by not undertake the production of the article on adopting some of the measures that have been which it has to spend so much money. By passed into law by the party now in power. But there is one thing, Sir, that they cannot opening a State mine and facilitating the trans- port and distribution of coal, Ministers, I say, take away from us. They cannot carry away will be doing an excellent work not merely for our splendid climate or our productive soil. the people who depend so much upon coal for New Zealand is naturally favoured. She their comfort, especially during the cold winter largely owes her prosperity to the fact that months, but for our artisans and manufacturers, she comprises nearly every climate, that she who have to rely very largely on fuel at a reason- possesses a soil unsurpassed in fertility, re able cost to enable them to carry on their sources adapted to a strong and vigorous popu- manufactures and compete with manufacturers lation, and that her adopted sons and daughters abroad. I say the Government will be doing a belong to an adventurous portion of the Anglo- noble work if they endeavour to reduce the Saxon race, who, by their love of freedom, their price of this article, because it is a commodity of courage, their industry, and their education are pared to federate with the Australian Colonies, treatment of political and social questions, if reference has been made in the Address to the ingly pleased to see in that reference the word " regret." I join in that regret ; but I regret and property enacted on the stage of that that political reforms, under no circumstances I believe that if we had only had wiser men at the head of affairs in another part of the world of unfortunate families, all this widespread dis- tribution of desolation, death, and sorrow, would way, and while I sav it is perplexing that, under an all-wise Providence those who set the light to the fuse that involved so huge a disaster on selves participants- while it seems strange that the colossal authors of those gigantic struggles

<page:78>

universal consumption, and must be regarded as one of the prime necessities of life. The high price maintained for coal in the chief cities of a colony so rich in that mineral as New Zea- land year after year

has simply been outrageous. Not only has the poor consumer been entirely at the mercy of an army of middlemen with regard to the price of that article, but they have no protection with reference to weight or quality. They have had to take an article absolutely blindfold and give any price demanded. That is a state of affairs which should not be tolerated. I trust the Government will not merely provide coal to meet the requirements of the public service, but that they will establish depots in the chief centres, so as to provide an abundance of coal for the benefit of the people at large. It will be one of the greatest boons for the families of workmen which has ever been granted to them. Then, Sir, we have some reference to our land legislation and to the question of cheap money. I believe it is largely due to the amount of settlement which has taken place under the Act of 1892 that the colony has grown so rapidly. It is chiefly owing to the settlement that has gone on steadily ever since the Act became law, and to the facilities given to small settlers to obtain the money they require to carry on their operations, at a reasonable rate-I say it is due more to those factors than to anything else that New Zealand is at present in such a prosperous condition. The Crown tenants-and I have a great many of them in my district - the men and women who have gone into the bush and carved out homes for themselves and their families, increasing as they are year by year, making, every day of their lives, improvements of a permanent character - not for to-day or to-morrow, but improvements that are going to last for all time-those settlers that are increasing our exports, adding not a few pounds but hundreds and thousands of pounds every year to the wealth of this country-those men and women who are building up New Zealand on a substantial and sound foundation are the people who have been regenerating this country, and it is to them that we owe our prosperity. They are, in every sense of the term, rapidly becoming the backbone of this colony. And notwithstanding all that may be said about the extravagance of the Government in this direction and that direction, while I deprecate anything in the shape of extravagance, for I am not one who would defend undue extravagance for a moment, I must acknowledge that, as far as I am aware, districts like my own and like those of Pahiatua and Rangitikei -- I see one honourable member smiling while I make this reference to his district - and also the Patea district, although it has not been represented - districts like those represented by members on both sides of the House have never realised more favours at the hands of any Ministry than they have done during the past year in the way of roads and bridges. . Can it be questioned that the amount of expenditure since the last session of Parliament on public works demanded by the settlers has exceeded anything that has taken place during any former similar period? If that is the case, can it be said that the Government are neglecting the true requirements of the country? If they recognise the necessity of carrying out those works quite independently of political feeling, I ask, can it be said that the Government are not performing their duty? I say for that reason alone I am bound to support the Ministry of the day. Roads have been made; bridges have been constructed over our rivers; works have been done of the utmost importance to those who are occupying land and consolidating their homes: and in the face of such facts as these I am bound to admit that the Government have assisted the settlers in a way that has never been performed by any previous Administration. I have referred, Sir, to the important hearing which the settlement of our bush lands has had upon the general prosperity of the colony, and I have also spoken in terms of appreciation of the nature of the policy which has been pursued by the Government, of the magnitude of the works that have been performed, and of the practical consequences manifested in the huge increase in the value of our exports. But, Sir, I regret to find that at a time when farmers have reason to be fairly contented with their position, when land has been considerably enhanced in value, when I believe there is more cause for contentment than ever before in New Zealand, there are emissaries travelling about endeavouring to foster prejudices which are likely to be very hurtful to the class of people I represent-the small farmers. We have individuals travelling over New Zealand trying to establish what they term "farmers' unions." Mr. HORNSBY.- The National Association in disguise. Mr. HOGG.- That is all it is. The honourable

gentleman has spoken the truth. Hon. MEMBERS. - Oh ! Mr. HOGG .- And, I hope, not for the first time by any means. Like myself, he has the courage of his convictions, and he is not afraid to speak out. When we find that there are wolves in sheep's clothing travelling through the country and endeavouring to seduce the farmers from their allegiance to the party that has assisted them in New Zealand it is time to issue a note of warning, and that is what I intend to do now. I maintain this: that these agitators have a card concealed up their sleeves, and other interests to serve besides the interests of the farmer. They are travelling from place to place, obviously for the purpose of trying to foster ill-feeling between the settlers and small farmers in the country and the workers in our towns and centres. That is their whole object-to foster prejudice between the small settlers, whose assistance and votes they want, and the workmen and artisans in the cities. Hitherto there has been a good feeling between town and country, and I, for one, do not want to see that disturbed. Hence, from my place of vantage in this House I intend to warn the farmers of New Zealand, and particularly the smaller settlers,

<page:79>

who have been specially appealed to, that if office lends a hundred pounds or a million in they listen to these men, and endeavour to start a league such as they propose, there is a danger that it will be the worst day's work for small means, who only wants to borrow £25 themselves they ever did. An Hon. MEMBER .- Tell the honourable member for Otaki that. Mr. HOGG .- I am sorry the member for Otaki is not here now; but I will tell the member for Pahiatua that I am satisfied he sympathizes with every word I have spoken, and he represents a community of small settlers. Now, I will leave that subject. I will leave such men to fry in their own fat, because I do not believe the farmers will allow themselves to be betrayed. Those three things welded together will make in this way. I hope they know properly how to estimate the characters I have referred to. Let us go to the next question referred to in the Governor's Speech-the Advances to Settlers Office, and the large amount of benefit derived through the introduction of the cheap-money system. Sir, it was predicted when that office was established as a department of the State that we were going to realise dire misfortunes : In the first place, it was said, the Government would be unable to borrow money to assist the settlers of New Zealand, because the foreign money-lender would not have sufficient confidence in the borrowers-a nice compliment to pay to the small settlers of this country. Then we were told that if we attempted it nearly all the money invested on security in New Zealand would be withdrawn. And where was it to be taken to? To South America and other parts of the world. We were assured that this money was going to be withdrawn, and that capital was going to take wings and fly away. Well, Sir, if a few thousands have been withdrawn-and I believe some money was withdrawn at that time-millions have been returned in their place. We have plenty of capital ; the country is overflowing with capital at the present time. So much for the pro-suffering all the evils of privation. And what phancies that we heard about ten or twelve years have we at the present time? I said to some one. And now, Sir, what has happened ? of these men, " Never mind, we are fighting a Capital has not disappeared ; but the old hard battle for you in the Legislature ; we are traditional money-lender, who endeavoured to humiliate the borrowers, who exacted 10, and 12, and 15 per cent. from them, surcharged them with heavy mortgage - fees, took the of the working-man begging for employment, last cent from them very often, and assisted you will find the employer running after the in foreclosing when they could not pay the heavy rates of interest - that class of indigent." I have seen this revolution brought about - not land - sharks, but a far worse about in my own district. I have seen the species-these Shylocks have found their employer haunting the street-corners looking for men to do labour he required. Is this not a passion gone, and they, and not the money, have disappeared. I think it is an excellent thing startling revolution ? Is it not a revolution of for New Zealand that they have gone. Admit-which any country might be proud ? ting that a large amount of money from time to time is not advanced by that office, I would ask you to contemplate the exceedingly valuable passed by our Parliaments during

the last purpose it serves. I regard it as a lever, a screw-press, by which the State is able to regulate labourer has been improved and entirely revolutionised, the price of money-the price of capital. money has flowed into the colony, The State, through the medium of this office, is our imports and exports have increased enormously, and there has never been such prosperity in New Zealand as what we find at the present time. Before I sit down I would like to call attention to the desirability of conserving the course of a year, it comes to the same thing : the office is the means of keeping down the rate of interest; so that the man of £50, can get his money at the same rate of interest as the man who wishes to borrow ten or twenty thousand. And, Sir, what has been the effect of all this? What constitutes and brings about the true prosperity of any country ? Here is a problem in political economy of a very simple character. You have the man, you have the spade, you have the soil ; there you have represented land, labour, and capital. any country on the face of the globe truly prosperous. Such a union will promote the prosperity and increase the commerce of any country. It will make the people contented and happy, keep them in their homes, give value to their produce, and make labour plentiful. It is the cementing, the close welding of these three factors - land, labour, and capital-that during the last decade has built up the prosperity of New Zealand, and is at present building up that of other lands which are copying our legislation. Sir, let honourable members only cast their eyes back a few years. Six or seven years ago we had men travelling all over the country-the roads almost alive with swaggers going from gate to gate, from station to station, begging for employment; we had our police-stations besieged by these wanderers, some of them almost prepared to enter our gaols because they dreaded they would be starved on the highway; we had men humiliated-sturdy working-men some of them ; I have seen them myself-willing to sell their labour for a bare pittance, and unable in many cases to get a meal when they required it. An Hon. MEMBER .- In the back blocks ? Mr. HOGG .- Yes; we had plenty of them there introducing laws that, not immediately but eventually, will be highly beneficial ; and I believe the day is not far off when, instead working-man and asking him to accept employment- Whether it is to be attributed to the Government or not, coincident with the legislation that has been ten or twelve years, the position of the

<page:80>

ing our forests. I trust that the Government will keenly watch what has been going on. From what has occurred over a number of years a very important lesson is to be learnt. We have had hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of valuable timber destroyed in the process of settlement, and I hope this will not be continued. We want to conserve our forests, to see that our timber is put to a good purpose, and to help our sawmills, because the sawmiller ought to be the forerunner in our bush districts of every class of settlement. It is by assisting him that we shall best assist the labouring-classes to get on the land and to found homes for themselves. If we do that we may depend upon it that we have not yet reached the height of our prosperity by any means. I do not for a moment believe that there is depression in front of us. I maintain that, as long as this Government or any other Government carries out the wishes of a politically educated people such as we have now in New Zealand, there is nothing whatever to fear. The country will be able to hold its own, and the clouds of depression will not be allowed to overcast our horizon. Turning to another important branch of our industries-that is, mining -I will ask, Has the Government done too much to assist the miner? I believe that every shilling spent in this direction is likely to turn out extremely profitable, in the same way as the expenditure on our roads, bridges, and railways is likely to be highly reproductive. I am satisfied that the money expended in developing the splendid mining resources of this country will eventually yield a profitable harvest. During the last month or two I travelled over some parts of the South Island where mining operations are being carried on. When I contrasted the evidences of what had been done in the haunts of the miner in former years with

the wealth of mining country still unexplored- awaiting prospecting and testing-I was forced to the conclusion that after all that has been done by the miners of New Zealand we have merely scratched the surface. When you look at those huge mountains between Springfield and Hokitika, and view the scenes where the miners of former days were able to make, some of them, not merely a fair living but a considerable amount of wealth, and you now find those places deserted ; when you consider that the huge mountains that rise abruptly above the gorges and rivers must have undoubtedly shed the wealth that has been found in their beds and terraces ; and when you contemplate the fact that hundreds of miles of that country has never yet been trodden by the foot of man, to what conclusion are you forced ? There is a field for the geologist and the prospector. There is a field in which, I believe, there is enough hidden wealth to sustain a much larger population than we are likely to have in New Zealand for the next century. Sir, not only has the Government of the day endeavoured to do its duty towards our settlers and our miners, but in the matter of public buildings and conveniences of various kinds the citizens of our towns have not been overlooked or forgotten. Who will deny the Postmaster-General the utmost credit for what he has done in instituting a penny postage ? That, however, has been only one of many directions in which the department over which he presides has done a great amount of good within the last twelve months to the people of the country. We have the colony reticulated not merely with telegraph, but with telephone wires. We have telephone bureaux in every direction. We have people living long distances apart who are now able to speak to each other at any hour of the day and almost at any hour of the night. We have conveniences that a few years ago we little dreamt of. I can point to places in my own district where, when I was first elected, it was impossible to hold communication with people who lived only a short distance away more than once a week or once a fortnight. Now they can hold communication every minute if they wish to. Is not that something the Government and their party have a right to receive credit for ? In the matter of public buildings, I do not believe there has ever before been so much money expended or such a fine class of buildings erected as we have had of late. I do not refer only to the principal centres ; there is hardly a town of any magnitude in New Zealand that has not had its streets materially improved by the character of the structures the Government is erecting for the convenience of the public. Then, Sir, I might be excused if I say a few words about the necessity of pushing on our railways. Such of our railways as are likely to be of importance to our settlers and are urgently required by the country ought to be completed. We ought to continue to expend as much money as possible on those works. The North Island Trunk Railway is one that will open up a very large amount of excellent country. It is a line that is likely to be highly reproductive. It will bring to the market a great quantity of exceedingly valuable timber-which, I believe, will produce for the Crown some millions of money. There are other lines, no doubt, that also ought to receive attention. An Hon. MEMBER .- The Wairarapa. Mr. HOGG .- Yes; there is the Wairarapa deviation. It should be seen to as soon as possible. I believe money could not be more profitably spent than in making a line to take the place of an incline that should never have been constructed. The track over the hill is a huge engineering blunder, and the sooner it is avoided the better it will be for the country. But I desire to say this : that, having travelled over the country between the Otira Station and Springfield, in Canterbury. I have been forced to the conclusion that any further outlay on that line will be money that might as well be thrown into mid-ocean. A tunnel of about six miles and a half in length now requires to be made through a huge mountain barrier ; and I would ask any one, seeing that the principal traffic is likely to be the tourist traffic, whether the prosecution of such a work will not be downright madness. The present value of this country is its

<page:81>

fine scenery, and I admit there is magnificent scenery. But what I say is this : We do not want to have these things. scenery, and that there is likely to be an immense amount of wealth on the one side lofty pinnacles porting tourist traffic cultivated ; but is it likely of wealth-men making millions out of

their the tourists are going to travel through a tunnel fellow-creatures and amassing huge fortunes, in order to see the scenery ? An Hon. MEMBER .- The coal and timber. while alongside are the deep, low gullies- Mr. HOGG .- Well, that is an unknown the slums in our cities, the haunts of quantity, and until the value of that coal and poverty-where pestilence and destitution are ever to be found. We do not want to have timber can be clearly ascertained, and until these vivid contrasts in a country like this, and I there is undoubted evidence that that line is hope they will never be tolerated. Our greatest going to be profitable for other purposes besides merely for conveying passengers and tourists from security against the evils that are afflicting older one side of the Island to the other, I think that countries is a highly educated population. I trust the day is not very remote when not no more money should be spent on it. I cannot merely will our primary schools and our tech- say much about the coal and timber. nical schools be freely open to the children of An Hon. MEMBER .- Gold. Mr. HOGG .- I hope there is gold. I believe there is mineral wealth in those mountains ; but, all those who are fit to enter them. And when as far as agricultural and pastoral country is we have achieved such a result as that we may concerned, the less said about that the better. We have beautiful scenery there, but when you depend upon one thing : that New Zealand will dispose of that asset, as far as I can see, there be no laggard in the race amongst nations, but is very little left. Well, Sir, I am sorry to have the colony will shine resplendent before the civilised world as the brightest branch of the to speak of this line in the terms I do, but I ask British Empire. honourable members not identified with the districts concerned, who can form an impartial of all, Sir, to congratulate Captain Russell opinion such as I believe I have been able to form, if they are not convinced, to go and see on the speech that he delivered to this House for themselves what I have witnessed. If they last night, if it be not presumption on my do so, I believe they will come back with almost part to do so. Though he said some things precisely the same opinion as I hold. There is that stung pretty deeply, still one can admire another direction in which I think the Govern- when one sees the surgeon apply the scalpel, even though it be painful to " the other fellow." ment are inclined to be fairly liberal, and it is a very important direction. The work was so skilfully done, so nicely done, They have been doing what they can to assist our schools, to that even those who had to smart under some improve our system of education, and to facili- of the words must have appreciated them ; and tate technical instruction. I need hardly say if ever there was an answer to the remarks that that. in my opinion, public money could not have been made with regard to that honourable possibly be spent in any more important direc- gentleman as to his being no "fighter," I think tion than that. The foundation, the basework, his speech last night was a complete answer to of a young nation depends almost entirely on the the charge that has been bandied about from lip quality of the education that the young receive. to lip and from newspaper to newspaper in this If you have an educated people you may depend colony. Sir, it reflects very small credit indeed on it that you will have wise laws and good legis- on the remnant of the party of which Captain lation, and that you will have every branch of Russell has been an ornament for so many years industry carefully and well cultivated. You will that they have resolved no longer to have a have the hidden resources of the country brought leader. Perhaps it is appropriate under the cir- to light, and you will have every possible means cumstances ; but I think they would have been adopted by the people to so regulate their affairs wiser if they had not listened to the clamour as to bring about universal comfort and pro- against Captain Russell on the plea that he was sperity. I do not wish, for one, to see in New "no fighter." The fact is that the honourable Zealand the state of affairs that is witnessed in gentleman has for years past supported many of the older countries of the world, where there are the best measures of the Liberal Government in huge mountains on the one hand in the form of this country. We all know he was one of the millionaires, such as you see in America, some firmest supporters of the labour-laws. of them making a very good disposition of their stands to his credit recorded in the parliament- wealth, no doubt - men like Carnegie, who de- ary history of this country, and there is no serve to be honoured, and almost deserve to be doubt

that he has realised, as any thoughtful worshipped. man must have realised, that what the Govern- An Hon. MEMBER .- Ob ! ment has been doing- or, at any rate, much of Mr. HOGG .- Yes, we have men-worshippers, it - has been for the amelioration of the people and a good many too; and, I say, if any men of this colony, and has been most successfully are to be worshipped the man who should be carried out by the Government. No doubt he chiefly esteemed by his fellow-men is the man has differed from some of the methods of the who, having acquired wealth, turns it to the Government. very best practical purposes. matters are far apart ; but I dare venture to say An Hon. MEMBER .- What about Peabody ? that there has been and is a certain amount Mr. HOGG .- Well, of course, there have been of sympathy between Captain Russell and the others besides Carnegie, and Peabody, no doubt, members of the Liberal party in this colony, rich and poor, but our secondary schools 8.0. and our universities will be available to Mr. HORNSBY (Wairarapa) .- I desire, first That His ideas and theirs in some

<page:82>

and I only hope and trust that, whenever the time comes that His Majesty's Opposition re- quires a leader, they will be so fortunate as to get a gentleman of the calibre and character of the honourable and gallant gentleman to lead them. I desire also to congratulate Sir Joseph Ward on having had conferred upon him the title of K.C.M.G. Now, a great deal of fun has been attempted to be poked at the idea of one of the leaders of the demo- cratic party accepting a title. Sir, while we have the recollection and example of Sir George Grey and his work in this colony we should never despise any man because he takes a title and remains a Radical in politics. Sir George Grey was the embodiment of Radicalism ; he was the father of Liberalism in this colony ; and I say he was no less a Radical, because he happened to be Sir George Grey. And I ven- ture to say that in the years that are to come Sir Joseph Ward will be no less a Radical in politics, and no less a reformer in this colony, because he is "Sir" Joseph Ward. I trust that he may long live to wear the title with honour to himself, and that he may pursue his work with profit to this colony-as much profit to this colony as has resulted in the work he has done in his position as Postmaster-General and as the head of the Railway service of New Zea- land. Now I want to say a word or two on the question of defence, because that question has cropped up in the Speech of His Excellency the Governor with reference to the assemblage of troops in various parts of the colony. Other honourable members have made reference to the fine display made by our Volunteers and cadets. The honourable member for Christ- church City (Mr. Collins), in referring to the review in Hagley Park, said it was an eye- opener-that it showed what material we had #cc-zero for our defence. It was a guarantee, he said, for the future of our colony being able to resist invasion. Now, Sir, it is perfectly true that there was gathered together in Christchurch a fine body of men, and it is undoubted that we also had a fine body of men, especially mounted men, in Wellington ; but as I saw those men pass by the Government Buildings in Welling- ton I noticed-for I am an old Volunteer officer myself-I noticed that they were carrying Snider rifles with old sword-bayonets on them, and that many of them were armed with the Mar- tini-Henry rifle; and I have seen some .303 rifles which have been imported for the purpose of arming our forces in the colony. They are the Martini-Enfield rifles, and I say distinctly that it would be nothing short of murder to send our men into the field to face an enemy with any of the weapons to which I have re- ferred in their hands. Long before a man could get into action with a Snider rifle he would be killed, and long before a man with a Martini - Henry rifle could get into action he would be killed; and, if it came to firing with a single - fire rifle against a magazine rifle, it would be a thousand-to- one chance against the man depending upon the former weapon. With regard to this question, we have had it proved over and over again in the South African campaign that the whole secret of success of men who are defend- ing a position is the possession of magazine rifles -the stopping-power of the torrent of lead which they are able to pour across a certain space. I was only speaking to an officer a little while ago, who told me that one body of men he commanded were three days advancing a hun- dred yards. Now, you can easily understand what

the position would be. Those men who were facing each other were armed with magazine rifles. What would be the position of our troops fighting against an enemy armed with magazine rifles ? The fact of the matter is this : The whole question of defence and arming our Volunteers has got to be taken into the most serious consideration ; and the sooner the better. The Government must face the position, and must arm our Volunteers with magazine rifles, and our men should be taught the use of them. An Hon.

MEMBER .- They were ordered to do so last year. Mr. HORNSBY .- And they have not done so, and I refer to this matter with the object of endeavouring to bring about a reform. It is absurd-it is worse than absurd ; it is a crime-to make the people of this colony believe that we have got the necessary armaments for our citizen soldiers, when, as a matter of fact, they are paraded in the public view with those Snider rifles and other obsolete arms. There is another thing that was proved with respect to the camps that were formed in Wellington and Christchurch. That is this : that we have no commissariat, that we have no ambulance, that we have no transport outside our railways, and that we have no arms. That is the position. That is the magnificent material we have ! We have men, we have horses, but we have nothing else. Mr. WILFORD .- And nothing to eat. Mr. HORNSBY .- " And nothing to cat," as the honourable member for the Wellington Suburbs says. And that brings me to the point I was just about to make with regard to the scandal in connection with the Newtown Park camp. \----- An Hon. MEMBER .- Not yet. Mr. HORNSBY .- I am going to speak about it, because I believe it is incumbent upon every man in this House to say what he thinks about these matters, and because this is the proper \-- place to do it. An Hon. MEMBER .- It is sub judice. Mr. HORNSBY .- No; have we not been told by the Defence Minister in this House that there is no Court in this country to try Colonel Penton ? I say this is the highest Court in the land, and I arraign Colonel Penton here to- night in the presence of this House, and I say his conduct should have brought upon him long since the displeasure of the Defence Minister of this colony. It is absurd to say there is no one to try him. He is the servant of this colony ; the Defence Minister is his employer, in the name of this colony ; and I say it was only right and proper that he should have been suspended the moment it was established that he had so committed himself. He should have been sus-
<page:83>

pended, and until he could have cleared himself of the charge made against him he should have remained suspended ; and if he could not have disproved the charge he should have been dismissed from the service of the colony. I cannot understand the hesitancy of the Defence Minister. Sir, it passes my comprehension that he should try and shield this officer, who has behaved himself in a most atrocious manner towards men who have devoted their time and money to the service of this colony. Is it to be that this man is to go unpunished ? Because I tell the Defence Minister, if he does, there will have been aimed at Volunteering one of the greatest blows ever levelled at the service, and until the whole of this thing is investigated, and until the punishment has been inflicted where it ought to be inflicted, then, I say, Volunteering in this colony is under a very dark cloud indeed. Sir, if I had been in command of the men there, and had dared to use such terms towards them, I should have expected some of those stalwart fellows to have dragged me off my horse and rolled me in the mud. And I say this, advisedly. If I had been one of the troopers to whom those words had been addressed I should have forgotten for the moment that I was in the King's uniform, and I should have forgotten that the offender had the King's uniform on. Now, Sir, with regard to another point in connection with this question, that of the massing of the cadets at Christchurch -- and I particularly want the Canterbury members to pay some little attention to what I am going to say, and I hope they will have something to say about it themselves when they speak in this debate-1 am credibly informed that, in one building used by cadets in Christchurch. after the boys had left the building had to be scoured from top to bottom, and that it took a tremendous amount of work to cleanse it -that it had to be fumigated and dis- infected. " That is very rough on the boys," as an honourable member remarks ; but I say it is still more rough on the so-called organization and the lack of

supervision on the part of the authorities. It was not the fault of the boys, but of those who were in charge of them ; and I say to put the boys as they were put, to huddle in a steamer, heaped together on straw like so many pigs, and taken down to Christchurch, where they had to rush round helter-skelter for every mouthful they got, and to live, as they did live, in dirt and filth in the school there-I say, Sir, it was disgraceful. Members may dissent, but I am quoting now from those boys who went from my district down to Christchurch, and I am also speaking on the authority of the Lyttelton Times newspaper. An Hon. MEMBER .- That report is incorrect. Mr. HORNSBY .- It is all very well to say that it is incorrect. The proper way to find out whether it is incorrect or not is to hold an inquiry into the whole business. Now, Sir, turning from the warlike aspect of things, I want to go on to the consideration of peaceful pursuits. I want to say a word or two in regard to land for settlements. Some time ago a promise was made to the people of the Wairarapa that some land would be repurchased there for land-settlement purposes. From that day to this there has not been a yard of land purchased ; but in the North Wairarapa -- or, rather, in the Masterton electorate-there has been one estate bought, and the resale of it was most successful. And I dare venture to say that if any land is taken in the South Wairarapa it will be most eagerly seized upon by the people. The land-hunger has not been appeased in our district, nor has there been any attempt to appease that hunger, and I hope the Premier will fulfil his promise made to the people of the Wairarapa, and that some estates will be repurchased, and that many of the broad acres now lying there will be peopled with small farmers. With reference to roads and bridges, that is a burning question in my electorate as well as in other people's electorates. I want to say this : that it is asking members of this House too much to, year after year, consent to what is neither more nor less than a farce, by voting large sums in the estimates and then never spending them. Now, Sir, this thing has been going on for, I dare say, a great many years. I, as a new member, at any rate, feel that it is an infliction that no member should quietly put up with. If the money is voted, let it be spent. If the men who are in charge of the roadworks in the various districts are not carrying on their work properly, and do not expend the money, then I say that the Minister of Lands must step in and clear out these useless people, and put practical men in their places. And, while I am speaking on this matter, let me say this: that an important appointment has recently been made, and I think my honourable friend the member for Masterton will agree with me when I say that no appointment that has ever been made has ever been a better appointment than that of Mr. Hursthouse, and the placing him in charge of the roads of this colony will give intense satisfaction. I think he is the right man in the right place. We have got a practical man who knows his business, and a man who will carry on that business in a proper way. I congratulate the Minister of Lands upon that appointment, and I trust the Minister of Lands will give Mr. Hursthouse every facility for carrying out those excellent ideas which we all know he possesses. Now, Sir, there is to be brought before this House a Bill dealing with the question of local government, and I do hope that before that Bill is allowed to pass through this House it will be considerably altered from the shape in which it now stands, and in the way that it will be submitted to members. There are many alterations that ought to be made, but the principal one is this : The Bill says that at the commencement of the Act all Road Boards and County Councils in existence shall be constituted Road Boards and County Councils under this Act. Mr. MASSEY .- Not Road Boards. Mr. HORNSBY .- I think so, and if the honourable member will look up the Bill he will

<page:84>

see that "County Councils and Road Boards existing at the time of the passing of this Act shall be constituted Road Boards and County Councils under this Act." I think you will find that is so. If that is so, it prevents the whole matter of reform we want to see worked out ; for I am one of those who believe that we ought to give to the local bodies-the counties of this colony - an assured finance-that it should not be incumbent on members representing constituencies in this colony to come here year after year and scramble for what we can get placed on the estimates. The money should be voted to the local bodies ;

they should have extended powers, and this House should not be a glorified Road Board, but a place where we should come to consider questions of colonial importance, and members should not be placed in the unfair position of having to go, cap in hand, to Ministers to beg for a road here or a bridge there. The proper way would be to give us back a modified provincialism. It would be the best day's work for the colony that could be done if we extended the powers of local bodies and prevented this unholy scramble at the end of every session for roads and bridges by members coming and suing to Ministers for what they require. Now I want to say a word or two about the Advances to Settlers Office, and I trust during the session something will be done to reform this office very considerably. Let me give you two examples of what has occurred in my district. A man in the Wharau district applied to the Advances to Settlers Office for a \$200 loan ; he had already had £200 advanced, and this would have made the total of the loan \$400. He was absolutely refused ; everything was tried to get this man the money, but the Advances to Settlers Office was simply adamant, and would not listen to the man. They took his fee and dismissed his application. Now, here is the position : They told this man that they could not advance \$400 on the property, yet within a year afterwards that man sold right, title, and interest in his lease in perpetuity to two brothers for \$1,400, without any stock at all—simply the value of his improvements on his land. Yet this man could not get a paltry \$200 over and above the amount of the original loan from the office ! There is another case of two other brothers in the same district. They have tried to get a loan and cannot, and yet I venture to state that they could get \$1,600 for their improvements : yet the office will not give them a paltry \$400. I say this : After making the most careful inquiries, and doing all that lay in my power to bring the office to a reasonable state of mind, I am forced to the conclusion that the settlers in the back blocks are not being fairly treated by this office. The small farmers are not being fairly treated by the office, and, if the Minister in charge of the department does not take precious good care, I tell him that the department will become an aid to the very men it was intended not to help when the Act was passed, and a stumbling-block to the men whom the legislation was intended to benefit. Already it has forced numbers of settlers into the hands of the money-lender, who is asking them for very much higher rates than is asked by the Advances to Settlers Office. Now, this state of things can no longer be tolerated. I do hope that the Minister in charge of the department will make a most searching inquiry into these statements I now make ; and I have made them purposely, so that inquiry shall be instituted. It is no use being mealy-mouthed about these matters. This is the proper place, when you have failed with the department, to thresh the matter out and call public attention to it, so that the grievance may be rectified ; and whoever is to blame—I do not know who is to blame, but, whoever it is, let the blame rest on his or their shoulders, and let the Minister be responsible to this House for the administration of this department ; and, now that he knows the facts, I feel certain he will endeavour to put matters right. I wish to say a word or two with regard to the San Francisco mail-service. I entirely and heartily agreed with every word that fell from the member for Wellington Suburbs on this matter; and I go further and say that it is a discredit to this House and to this country to perpetuate an agreement with a company which is owned by people who have put upon the British flag one of the greatest affronts ever offered to it. I say that, if we have any patriotism at all, if there is anything in all this cry about patriotism, if it is not merely lip service, and if we have any respect for the flag we have heard so much about, we must do all in our power—at any rate I, as one member of this House, will do all in my power—this session to prevent the perpetuation of the arrangement with Spreckels and Co. I want to see, as I believe every member who is a really patriotic man wants to see, an "all red " service. Whether it is to go by way of Vancouver or not matters nothing. All I want to say is that, with regard to the people who say that they will not employ British sailors and not allow British ships to trade with their ports, we are not going to put our hands in our pockets to perpetuate that sort of thing. An Hon. MEMBER .- It is all right. The Premier saw Admiral Remey. Mr. HORNSBY .- Admiral Remey is a very fine man; and I notice that a reference has been made in the Governor's Speech

to the visit of the "Brooklyn." I had the honour and the pleasure of meeting the officers of the "Brooklyn" when they were in Wellington, and I never met a finer class of men. One incident is worth mentioning. I pointed to the menu card, whereon the two flags- the British and the United States-were entwined, and I said to one of the principal officers of the "Brooklyn," "That is how we should like it to be." He said, "That is how it must be. That is how we want it, and we must have it." I believe that these two flags should be entwined, and that we should stand or fall together. I believe that that is the feeling of the American navy pretty much all round, but I am sure it is not the opinion of the American people all round. However, when we get the United States navy sympathizing heartily with us, I think we have

<page:85>

made one great step in the direction of the union of the English-speaking people, and I am very glad, therefore, that reference was made to the "Brooklyn," so that I might add my tribute of respect to one of the finest bodies of men I have had the honour of being introduced to. In conclusion, let me say that I am glad that the Opposition has not been left for very many hours without a leader. I was rather surprised that this result should have come so quickly as it did, but we had the resignation, as it were, the throwing-down of the robes of office, figuratively speaking, by Captain Russell, the member for Hawke's Bay, 8.30. and we had them picked up and placed on the broad shoulders of the member for Riccarton, Mr. G. W. Russell. So that the leader of the Opposition is still a Russell, though a different kind of Russell. Sir, I may say I think the honourable gentleman acquitted himself very well. He raged, and stormed, and chaffed in turn. He was "every- thing by turns and nothing long." He has always been so. I hope, Sir, he will be able to gather together a very nice little army of soldiers that he may lead them in this House. We have heard a good deal lately about new parties. We have heard a good deal about new Ministries, and possibly here we have the germ of the new Ministry. I would like to see it when it comes into its full force and flower. No doubt, those gentlemen who are to-night sitting on the recognised Opposition side of the House will be only too glad, when this new company of soldiers comes to take their place, to clear off those benches and shelter themselves on this side behind men for whom they have, no doubt, all along had sympathy as well as respect. We have now common ground on which to meet. We know a new party has sprung into existence, and that the leader is determined to smite hip and thigh the right honourable gentleman who occupies the position of Premier of this colony. He tried to smite him hip and thigh last night. I do not know that he succeeded very well. I do know this, however: that the speech at one time was good-natured and good-humoured, but at the end it degenerated into a personal-a very personal-attack on the Premier-an attack that neither did credit to the gentleman who made it nor to the House in which it was made. If we cannot agree with each other, then let us agree to differ from each other, and, for the honour of the House, pay a certain amount of respect to each other. I do not want that to be taken as a lecture from me, a new member ; but I feel it, and that is why I say it. An Hon. MEMBER .- You are not a new member. Mr. HORNSBY .- Yes, I am a new member, and I hope to be an old member; but I say this : that, young or old in the House, I will always give every other man, I do not care how bitterly he may be opposed to me, credit for his opinions, and I will respect him for his opinions, and I will expect him to do the same towards me. If we meet each other in that spirit always we shall get rid of a great deal of the acrimony and bad blood that is engendered in the House from time to time. It is well we should remember we are here not as the sport and plaything of this or that party, but that we are here as the representatives of the people, and that we represent both sides of politics in this House. Do I represent only the Liberals in my district ? No. Every man, woman, and child in my district is represented by me in this House, and that, I take it, should be the standard of conduct of every other member. When personalities are dragged on to the floor of the House it is discreditable to the members of the House and to the man who is guilty of introducing them. I trust, Sir, that what I have said will be taken in the spirit in which it is intended it should be taken. I thank honourable members for listening to me so patiently. I

hope other honourable members will take up the story and debate those questions we all know they are willing and anxious to debate. Let us have from them a reason for the faith that is in them, and let us have a critical examination of the Government policy from the Government side of the House. It cannot be said that we are "dumb dogs," for we have taken the responsibility upon ourselves which the Opposition have refused. Of course, we are told there is no Opposition now, only a segregation of atoms, a thing of shreds and patches. It is an Opposition no longer. We have taken up their duties, and, as candid friends of the Government, we do not hesitate to give them our opinions about their policy. As far as I am concerned I intend to always tell them my opinion of what they do, and I hope I shall always be found properly and candidly criticizing every act of the Government, and giving good reasons for the way in which I differ from or agree with them on any and all of the policy measures they may bring before this House. Mr. BUDDO (Kaiapoi) .- Sir, it was not my intention to speak on the Address in Reply this session, for reasons which I think I have stated before in this House. I, like some other members, feel it is now somewhat out of date to discuss grievances before Supply is granted, and it is a waste of valuable time at this particular time of the session, when private members' Bills and other work should be the first business before Parliament. I have just heard my honourable friend the member for Wairarapa speak of the treatment of the cadets when they were in Christchurch at the review in connection with the Royal visit, and, having myself some connection with the Normal School, in which they were accommodated, it occurred to me it would not be wise to allow the remarks of my honourable friend to pass unchallenged, for I feel sure when I have explained the circumstances he will consider he has been misinformed.' However, before I speak on this particular subject I wish to compliment my honourable friends the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply, and I may also compliment the other members of the House who have spoken, for the manner in which they have criticized the Address. I consider if criticism is neglected in this House the business

<page:86>

ness of the Parliament and country must suffer, and I feel satisfied the honourable member for Christchurch City, as well as the honourable member for Wellington Suburbs, have done their duty well and fearlessly. With regard to some of the measures foreshadowed in the Address from the Throne, I shall just confine myself to one or two of them. There is, first of all, the question of defence, and the better arming of our Volunteer and cadet corps. This, I trust, will be attended to at an early date, and I hope up-to-date rifles will be supplied. I consider, like honourable gentlemen who have already spoken who saw the review at Christchurch, that we ought to be proud of our Volunteers and cadets. It is a considerable number of years since I witnessed a review on a large scale in the Old Country, and, having compared them, I feel, as a New-Zealander, proud of the eleven thousand Volunteers who were reviewed at Christchurch, and the manner in which they acquitted themselves. With regard to the treatment they received, it is true, unfortunately, that some sharp, frosty weather was experienced just at the particular period when the troops began to arrive; but our troops know perfectly well that a camp is not a drawing-room, and they went there with the full expectation of enduring the ordinary hardships of a soldier's life, and they came out well. I spoke to some of them myself, and they stated to me that they were treated as well as could be expected, and that they had nothing to complain of. Now, that being so with regard to the Volunteers, I think it is a sufficient answer to my honourable friend the member for Wairarapa. I wish now to speak of the cadets. When the Government informed the Board of Education that they intended sending on to Christchurch 2,600 cadets, and that they wished them usefully accommodated in the Normal School, the matter was referred to the Normal School Committee, of which I have the honour to be a member. We immediately informed the Government that we were prepared to accommodate eighteen hundred. Having consulted the clerk of works, we came to the conclusion that was the utmost we could accommodate in the school. However, with a great deal of planning, I believe more than two

thousand were accommodated. Further accommodation was provided in the East Christchurch School for the remainder of the three thousand cadets that attended the review. The cadets expressed their satisfaction with the accommodation, and in only one case did I hear a complaint from the cadets of the manner in which they were treated, and that was of one company who arrived after midnight and had to march a distance of three-quarters of a mile -- from East Christchurch to the Normal School -to get some hot coffee before turning in for the night. That might be a hardship, but it was quite unavoidable, for there was absolutely no provision for feeding the cadets in the particular school in which they were billeted -- the Gloucester Street School. Then, with regard to the condition of the school after the cadets left, the officers explained to myself and other members of the Normal School Committee that the sanitary arrangements were first-rate. I might state that the Committee of the school took that matter in hand, and told the officers that that would be attended to, and the Defence Department approved of the arrangements. But, with regard to the tables in the dining-room in the Normal School, there was no doubt a collection of food accumulated under the table, and that was the whole nuisance that was complained of. Each company as it came in was served out with rations. These cadets were young lads-a few of them between nine and twelve years of age, and very few over sixteen-and they got men's rations-there was more food than they could consume. The result was that the companies following filed into the tables too quickly to enable the tables to be cleared, and they made a clean sweep of what was left by the previous company and threw it under the table, a fresh supply being handed out. As to the complaint in the Lyttelton Times that the food was not good enough : when that letter was sent to the paper, the editor put a footnote to say that, on the previous day to that on which the letter was sent, the cadets had wasted a great deal more good food than they ate. So much for that. To make sure that my information was correct, on the Wednesday following the review I personally went to the Christchurch Railway-station and interviewed a large number of cadets- some four hundred-who were on their way to ship for the North Island, and in every case I got an unqualified approval of the manner in which they were treated. This was a credit to the contractor who supplied the food, for it must be remembered that he had to supply far more rations than he had contracted for. I think I have fully satisfied my honourable friend that there is no reason for complaint at the treatment of the cadets in Christchurch at the review, with the exception of the complaint of the company of cadets who had to march some three-quarters of a mile to the Normal School after midnight in order to get a meal before turning in for the night. I do not intend to deal with the whole of the Address, but there are one or two matters which I wish to emphasize-they are matters more particularly relating to the country districts. One of them is with regard to the shortage of railway rolling-stock in the threshing season in Canterbury, and also, I think, in Otago. It is altogether inadequate for the purpose required. I have known farmers who took six weeks to get a thousand sacks of wheat sent to the Lyttelton stores. This lack of rolling-stock leads to piling up the grain at the railway-station, and to a great deal of loss and waste of farmers' time. It also causes the mixing of the various lots of farmers' grain, and consequently there is a great deal of irritation among neighbours when loading. That was the case almost right through the last grain season. I understand that a member of the Railway Traffic Department went along the Ellesmere Railway, and while there saw an immense collection of grain at the various railway-sheds. He inter-

<page:87>

viewed several farmers, and he stated, in answer to their complaint, that it would be absolutely useless to get a larger supply of wagons unless some more expeditious method of unloading wagons was adopted or more stores were available, so that wagons could be returned promptly. In order to get their share of the wagons farmers frequently loaded them up at night ; but this made little difference, as they could be loaded and sent on much faster than they could be unloaded and returned. If the farmer does not desire to ship he certainly requires to store, and, the rates being against him for storing at any intermediate

station, the result is that practically every wagon of grain [occasion, because there will presently be an is sent to Lyttelton, and a congested state of affairs occurs. This causes great delay to the rolling-stock, and disappointment and loss of time to the farmers. I have suggested to the Minister for Railways-and I again offer the suggestion-that a through rate only should be charged on grain for shipment, notwithstanding the fact that the grain is stored at some siding. If a declaration was made by the sender of the grain that it was ultimately intended to be shipped, that ought to be sufficient to insure that only a through rate shall be charged. The result would be that a large quantity of grain would be unloaded at Addington, at Christchurch, and elsewhere, thus allowing the trucks to return earlier to country stations, and no extra charge would be made to the farmer for breaking the journey. I do not believe there would be any extra haulage or cost to the Rail- way Department, because the grain has, in any case, to be taken to the wharf for shipment, and it might just as well be drawn from a siding at Addington or Christchurch as from a siding at Lyttelton. I put this matter rather pointedly to the Minister, because I feel certain there is not a body of people, either industrial or com- mercial, in the colony who would put up with these inconveniences as the farmers have done ; and they deserve better treatment, considering that broken weather prevents the cartage of grain, and in many cases leads to damage and loss of time. There is only one other matter I wish to refer to, and that is the County Councils Bill, and I desire to say that, however much I may wish a reform of local government, I trust there will be no effort on the part of the House to make our local government bodies large and unwieldy. There is a limit to everything, and there is certainly a limit to economy in the matter of making large local bodies. There may be some local bodies that may not fulfil their whole functions and economise the rates, yet there are a large number of moderate-sized local bodies which are doing their work economically, and in a manner which, I think, cannot be im- proved upon. My impression is that, while the County Councils Bill is necessary, it should go in the direction of making reasonable-sized local bodies, and not unwieldy ones. I have no- thing further to add with regard to the Address in Reply that has not been referred to by other honourable members, except to state that, while I make these criticisms on the management of our railways, I do not think for a moment that the Government has been lax in its administra- tion ; in fact, I can compliment them on many things. The railways have been run as cheaply as possible, the penny postage has also been inaugurated, and in a great many ways the settlers have been benefited, and there has been very general prosperity and little poverty in comparison with the number of the popula- tion. I trust that the House will do all that is possible during the present session to pass carefully - thought - out legislation in the in- terests of the settlers and of the colony. Major STEWARD (Waitaki) .- I only propose to address a few words to the House on this opportunity more fully to discuss the Govern- ment and its policy when we have before us the Financial Statement ; but, Sir, I will take this opportunity, as there is time this evening, to allude to two or three matters which have been to some extent touched upon by previous speakers, and in which I myself and my con- stituents take a very great interest. Before proceeding to deal with these I should like to refer, however, to one or two remarks made by the honourable member for Wairarapa. If he will permit me to do so, I must take exception to his attitude with regard to the charge made against Colonel Pole-Penton. It is a good and safe doctrine that we should hear the other side before recording a judgment. In this matter we have heard only one side up to the present, and I protest against this House, or any mem- ber of it, proceeding to the condemnation of any particular officer until the whole case has been inquired into, and until the full merits of the case are known. It may be that Colonel Pole-Penton is to blame for what has occurred, or it may be that some other officer is to blame for that which we all so much deplore ; but until we are satisfied on indubitable evidence as to who is the person blameworthy I think it ill becomes us to pre- judge the case. Now, Sir, I wish to congratu- late, as other members who preceded me have done, the Hon. the Postmaster-General and other members of the Ministry who have re- ceived recognition from the Crown for the services they have rendered in their capacity of Ministers in this colony. I congratulate

the honourable gentleman in particular, because I think he has made for himself a name in connection with penny postage in New Zealand which alone would have well entitled him to the honour which has been bestowed upon him I wish also just to say that I never myself subscribed, though I am a Liberal, to the extreme Radical doctrine that no titles should be accepted by a Liberal member, and I am glad to see that the Government have come round to my way of thinking, although they were not of that way of thinking in 1891, 1892, and 1893. But, Sir, the matters to which I particularly wish to direct attention are, first, in connection with the Land for Settlements Act, in my opinion the most important measure that has ever been brought forward in this House. It has done a great deal more to promote the prosperity of New Zealand than

<page:88>

any other measure I ever remember to have passed this Legislature, and I only regret that the author of that Bill is not in a condition of health to be fighting in the same direction along with us in this Parliament. I am pleased, Sir, that he also has received recognition at the hands of the Crown for the yeoman service he has done, as an ex-Minister of this colony-I refer to my old friend Sir John McKenzie. But, Sir, I must express my disappointment with the administration of the land-for-settlements policy during the past year. It does seem to me that we have come to a dead stop with regard to the acquisition of land for settlements -not because there is not plenty of land that could be found, and obtained at suitable prices, while there are hundreds and thousands of men ready to take up that land ; but, either because the Government have been too busy in connection with other matters that have been pressing upon their attention, or because they have lost their enthusiasm in so good a cause. Sir, I do hope the Minister of Lands will press this matter forward, and that during the next few months we shall hear of further blocks of land being acquired in the South Island and opened up for settlement. An honourable member from the North-Mr. Fowlds-this afternoon said he could not see why there should be any unsatisfied earth-hunger, or why there should be a scarcity of land, seeing the large amount of land the Government could throw open, if they chose, in the North Island. Well, Sir, I agree with the honourable gentleman that the Government should open land in the North Island ; but he will allow me, as a South Island member, to say that that could be done, and at the same time land should also be opened in the South Island ; for it is not expedient that we should have to send our settlers and settlers' sons from the neighbourhood where they themselves can, if the Government so choose, be well established, to take up land in the North Island. There are plenty of people in the North Island to take up land there; we have plenty of people also in the South Island to take up our land ; and I ask that we should join forces, and not set ourselves one against the other, and impress upon the Government that land must be opened up for settlement in both Islands, and opened up without delay. The honourable member for Wairarapa complained of the administration of the Advances to Settlers Department. I do not know that he blamed the Minister-I do not think he did-but he said that there was somebody to blame. Well, Sir, I do not care who is to blame, but there is no doubt that there is blame attachable to somebody. I can bear out the honourable member's statement, and I can give another instance of the same kind. In a settlement in the neighbourhood of Waimate there was a settler who had had the misfortune to have his land flooded for two years in succession. And herein let me say that he had a grievance against the Government, because the Government ought to have assisted in deepening the drain to prevent a recurrence of the flooding. However, he had his land flooded, and his crop was largely destroyed. He also had the misfortune to have his wife under the doctor's hands for it is therefore quite easy many months. to understand that that man fell into arrears with his rent. Now, he had put substantial improvements upon his property in the way of fencing, erecting a house, and other buildings, and he asked me for advice as to what he was to do, as the Land Board threatened to turn him out because he was not able to pay his rent. I said, "Why, you have plenty of property ; why not apply to the Advances to Settlers Department ? You can get an ad-

vance and pay your arrears of rent, and have a little over to carry you on until your next crop comes in." Well, he made his application, but he did not get his money. I wrote on his behalf to the Board, and I interviewed the Board, and I got an officer of the Lands Department to go with me and inquire into the circumstances. That officer reported that, in his opinion, the improvements were worth double the amount that the man had applied for. He applied again, and he was again refused, and he had to give up his holding. Sir J. G. WARD .- Was the rent paid ? Major STEWARD .- His rent was not paid ; but if the advance had been made he would have been able to pay his rent ; and it was claimed that the money could not be advanced because the rent was in arrear for more than six months. Well, here is the injustice of the position : A man who has had no trouble, such as this man had, and who is able to pay his rent regularly, is able to go to the Advances to Settlers Department, and, having proper security, is able to get an advance ; but the other man, who really wants it, and who has been in trouble, and who is able to offer as good security, is debarred by the law from getting an advance. I say that the law which provides that should certainly be amended. Sir, there seems to me to be a want of sympathy, if not on the part of the Minister, yet on the part of the officers of his department, with the settlers. I do not ask that the settlers should get anything that is unfair, but I do ask that they should be at least as liberally and as well treated as they would be treated by a private landlord, and that is not the case now. I could point to instance after instance, where, if any private landlord had been asked for certain accommodation, the applicant could have got it ; but when the tenants of the Crown go to the Government officers they find them perfectly adamant, and they cannot get reasonable accommodation. These are facts into which I wish the Minister would himself personally inquire, and he would find that a remedy is wanted, and that remedy ought to be applied at once, or he will find that the popularity which the Government have deservedly gained in the administration of the Land for Settlements and Advances to Settlers Departments will be speedily lost. Then, the honourable member for Wairarapa pointed out another grievance- that votes are passed by this House session after session but are not expended, and the

<page:89>

money has to be revoted. The Premier then, in connection with this very matter, said, in answer to some honourable gentleman on the Opposition benches, that contracts were entered into and the money that was unexpended was carried forward as a liability. I think the fact will be found to be, in a very inferior class of sheep in this country ; but the large number of instances, that no contract is entered into, that nothing whatever has been done, and what is put down as a liability is simply the reiteration of the vote of last year, which is regarded as a liability because it was voted. Mr. PIRANI .- That is not the law. Major STEWARD .- Well, I have found it to be the practice, whether it is the law or not. At any rate, it is the case that session after session money is voted for roads and bridges, which money, it is found, has not been expended when the House meets again; and I do think some scheme should be devised whereby when votes are passed the money should be placed to the credit of the local governing bodies to carry out the works authorised by this House. I find in the Speech a paragraph which admits that the necessity for the extension of the commerce of the country, and for the granting of facilities for the transmission of our products to other markets, still continues ; and then follows a reference to the efforts of the Government to obtain cheap freights for our produce to other markets. These efforts are very praiseworthy, and, though at present they do not appear to have led to very much, I hope they will be persisted in until we obtain the cheapest possible means of transmitting our produce to other markets. I should like to point out to the House and the country that there is a greater necessity than many people apprehend for opening up new markets. The farmers of New Zealand are going to lose the London market for their cereals. When it is known that the Argentine can produce, and does produce, wheat in enormous quantities, and can land it in London and sell it at a profit at 1s. 7d. per bushel-this fact came before us during our recent investigations-it will be seen that it

will be impossible for New Zealand, with the price of labour here, to compete. We shall still continue to grow a large amount of wheat ; we must do so in connection with the rotation of crops and our mixed farming ; and we must get rid of that wheat somewhere. I believe we shall have to send it eastwards and sell it in other markets than those that have already been exploited, and the Government have done well to appoint a Trade Commissioner to find out where markets are available for us. For oats there will be a large market for some time to come in South Africa ; and in this connection I may mention that it is a notable fact that, of the large amount of oats-two hundred thousand pounds' worth-which was sent from this country last year to New South Wales, not more than about 8 per cent. was consumed in New South Wales itself, all the rest being transhipped to South Africa. We could have sent it equally well ourselves direct to South Africa, where I believe we shall have a also with regard to our frozen meat. The frozen meat which has been sent from the River Plate of recent years has been very much inferior to New Zealand, or even to Australian mutton. That was owing to the fact that we have a much sheep-owners in that part of the world are now doing their very utmost to improve their sheep. They are paying large sums of money for the very best blood they can get, and at a not very distant date I believe that an equally good article will be shipped from the Plate to the English market as can be sent from New Zealand, and as it can be sent much cheaper from there than from here we shall be heavily handicapped. Then, Sir, it is evident that we must look for another market for our frozen meat also ; and, fortunately, I believe there are large markets available in the East and in Africa. But it is not merely a question of cheap freight to these places, but it is also a question of having proper cold storage available for placing the carcasses in when they arrive there, so that our mutton will not have to be put on to a flooded market and sold for what it will fetch, as in a warm climate is now inevitable, as it must be sold almost immediately on being discharged from the ship. If we had cool-storage belonging to the Government at the Cape and other places, which could be used at a small charge by consignors of frozen meat, we could place our produce on the market at the proper time, and we should derive very large benefit therefrom ; and I hope, therefore, that one of the instructions to the Trade Commissioner who has gone to the Cape will be to secure on behalf of our colony suitable sites for the purpose of putting up frozen-meat stores. House could not do better than vote this session the necessary sum of money to establish such cool-stores, so that we might be able to send our produce with safety to a very large and profitable market. Then, there is one other matter to which I would like to call the attention of the Minister for Railways as forcibly as I can. It is that, in connection with or as a result of the large amount of settlement that has gone on under the Land for Settlements Act, the amount of grain that is coming forward for railway freight is enormously greater than it was two or three years ago. The honourable gentleman promised me that during last recess he would accompany me through my district-that is, through a part of South Canterbury and part of North Otago, where a very large amount of settlement has gone on-and see for himself the needs of the district in this respect. I absolve him for the non-performance of that promise, inasmuch as he has not had the time during the recess to fulfil it, but I rely upon his fulfilling the promise during the coming recess. In the meantime I feel sure that, travelling up and down the main line, he must have seen with his own eyes that all along the railway, at almost every station, there are piles and piles of grain which could not be taken into the sheds because the sheds are not large enough, and which have to be protected

<page:90>

as far as is possible by tarpaulins. That sort of protection is unsatisfactory. If there is 'bad weather the sacks get damaged, and there might be heavy claims on the department. I therefore urge the honourable gentleman to come down to the House with proposals for a sufficient vote to enable the present shed accommodation to be enlarged, because I can assure him that the plethora of grain is not an abnormal circumstance, but that he will have to look for years to come to a very large grain freight in

the districts I speak of. It is only right that, as it is a paying trade for the railway, proper facilities should be provided for those who wish to forward their grain. Sir, I thank honourable members for the patient hearing they have given to me. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .-- Mr. Speaker, I think I can safely say without fear of contradiction that the position at the present moment in this Parliament-or any other Parliament in a self-governing colony - is absolutely unparalleled. Sir, what has brought it to this condition ? It is not for me to say, because the responsibility is not mine. Responsibility rests upon the gentlemen who are sitting opposite. I would like, Sir, before going further into the situation, to compliment the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply upon the speeches delivered. They were temperate in tone, the matter was excellent, and, in respect to the speech from the mover, its effects told in so striking a manner upon the member for Hawke's Bay that that honourable gentleman, in his opening remarks, for once, I think, forgot the position he held, and forgot that kindly and gentlemanly behaviour that usually characterizes him in debate in this House. Sir, I think the remarks of the honourable gentleman were to this effect: "The honourable member who proposed the Address was a roaring lion last session, but since then the lion-tamer has been at work, and we find the member for Christchurch City this session is as gentle," not as the cooing dove, but, I think he said, "a sucking dove." He went further. If he had stopped at that I would have had no reason to complain. I do object, however, to the last quotation of the honourable gentleman. Sir, it is quite true the lion-tamer has been at work; but it has not been the leader of the House, it has not been the member for Westland. The lion tamer has been the people of this country. Sir, the people of this country have had good reason in the past to remember what happened to them during the time those members on the Opposition benches were in power. Those members who again sought to come into power. We know what they did, and what they would do again if they had the opportunity. Sir, I do not need to repeat the story. I would like to efface it from the history of our country-how this fair land, with its great natural advantages, and peopled by a people unequalled within the British Empire, had been brought to the state-approaching ruin and disaster- in which our party found it ten years ago. It deserves better treatment at the hands of. It was a country that was in the mire. Its people had practically been deprived of their rights ; and shelter-sheds, and poverty, and all the evils of the old land were in our midst. People were rushing away from the country, driven from it by the bad management and the effete-ness of those who were ruling in those days. Sir, it is well that we should occasionally remind the people of this country of the "wretched past." It is the same country, and the same people. We do not say that the great change for the better has come about on account of the work of this Parliament. All we did was to say, "Give the country and its people an opportunity. Let there be freedom, let there be the opportunity, and the result will be to the advantage of the people of the country." And, Sir, this opportunity has been given. The laws of our colony are now being copied by other countries, as well as by the British Empire and her colonies ; and it may be said, Sir, that after that has been done the reason why the people refuse to trust the members on the Opposition benches is because "the lion-tamer has been at work." Sir, there can be only one answer to it-the people are the best judges. In the general election before last, who was the roaring lion upon the platforms, telling the people of the country that they were going back with a dead certainty, that Seddonism and Liberalism would be things of the past, that they alone would show the country how unsafe it was to trust them ? And I would like to know who, after that election, were the sucking doves. Then, Sir, might I remind my honourable friends opposite of the last election, and the last Parliament. Who was it then that boasted ? Who was it then we found was the roaring lion ? The member for Hawke's Bay ; and with him, Sir-I do not apply it offensively-were the tigers, and the leopards, and other animals of that class, but of a lower order. Sir, we heard the roaring of the lion. We heard, Sir, from the tigers and the leopards what the result would be and what would take place. We heard it, Sir, during the election. During the election, Sir, the lions jumped through their rings, the leopards followed them, and the tigers, Sir, bounded from one side of the cage to the

other. But when the elections were over where were the lions, the tigers, and the leopards ? The people said, "The leopards can- not change their spots." Sir, they are there still, but the whip hangs over them. They are lying there, crouching and ready at any time for a fatal spring to the Treasury benches. But, Sir, the crack of the whip has sounded- the whip of public opinion -and they are as mild. politically, as any ruffians that we read of who ever scuttled a ship or cut a throat. But all this is unparliamentary. There is something I have read about the scuttling of a ship, and doing something else. Sir, I was very much amused, as well as pained, when I heard the member for Hawke's Bay read- ing his own political burial service. I, Sir, felt a better fate should have been his. He

<page:91>

those whom he has so faithfully led; and, | bers on that side of the House voting for a State coal-mine. How they would enjoy it ! in a great measure, if left to his own I fancy I see them voting for the prevention judgment, I have no hesitation in saying his of monopolies. How they will enjoy it ! Their party would never have been in the unfortunate faces will be a picture of merriment, and they position we find it in to-day. He has taken to his counsel and he has taken to his bosom follow ; we can follow him with confidence, and vipers who sting him. They were once upon this side of the House; but, Sir, the happiest represent the people of this country." May I day that ever happened to the Liberal party was when they left it. My honourable friend to the land-for-settlement policy,- regrets now, no doubt, that he was not careful of the company he kept. The position is not changed from last session at all. The leader of the Opposition last session officially intimated to me that his party had decided that they would not elect a leader, and that he was not the leader of the Opposition, only he did not stand up in the House and tell the House and leader of the Opposition-the honourable mem- country so. It was so; and he officially and properly intimated that to me. We got over it, capable of taking his place. The first mate and the country and the business of the House went on very well. I do not think the simple announcement that the Opposition are not able to agree amongst themselves as to who is to be leader is in the slightest degree going to inter- fere with the business of the country. And to some of my young friends on this side of Statement we say that the land-for settlement policy is to be vigorously pursued-in other the House I would say, " Do not be off your guard." The members occupying the Opposi- tion benches, by not speaking on this Address, imagined our friends would be tempted to ad- versely criticize. They have read in the papers trict has been at a standstill - that in five -those papers which, I regret to say, mislead them, and ofttimes mislead the country-that years there has only been an increase of a thousand in the population. Then, I say, Sir, there was within the great Liberal party seeth- that demands that there should be a vigorous ing discontent. "Give them the opportunity, carrying-out of the land-for-settlement policy. and you will see member after member assailing the Government." Well, Sir, last session we that but the honourable member for Hawke's allowed this debate to go by default. This ses- Bay? But I am dubious whether the honour- sion every opportunity is being given to the able gentleman will walk into the lobby to vigor- members of the Liberal party, and I say, as ously support the land-for-settlement policy. leader of this party, that there has always There was wholesale plundering of the Natives been the greatest latitude and the greatest of their land in years gone by ; but, of course, freedom of debate allowed. We have listened to the speeches of members on this side of the that is now outside the question, and we must buy those lands and pay for them at a fair price, House who have done their duty to the country. There are matters that require to be mentioned, for no Minister and no Ministry is perfect ; and, I say, in the multitude of counsellors children may live on it; and that closer settle- there is wisdom. We, as a Ministry, are only the mouthpieces and only the representatives demand in a fair and equitable manner. Then of the members who support us, and they in we should have to have Government steamers. turn are representing the great masses of the people of this country. Under these conditions, and with that position defined, the situation at the present moment is this: colony and place the producers of the colony in the Opposition dare not challenge any

single item in His Excellency's Address. If they think by not debating it they are going to creep out of their responsibility they are making a great mistake. They are not going to debate it : are they going to vote for it ? Well, I will give them the opportunity. They may, however, do as they have done before—leave the Chamber. If, then, Sir, they produce at the lowest possible rates, aiding vote for what we call the Address in Reply, they will only be equal with honourable members on this side of the House, who also will support it. But, imagine some of those members will say, " At last we have a man we can believe every single word he says ; and we, too, say to the leader of the Opposition, with respect An Hon. MEMBER .- Who is the leader of the Opposition ? Captain RUSSELL .- The honourable member for Riccarton. Mr. SEDDON. - What's in a name? I should think, after reading the speech of the senior member for Wellington City as to the member for Hawke's Bay -- that he was the only one naturally expected to take the captain's position .. However, Sir, rather than there should be any difficulty in that respect, if they will only meet and unanimously agree to ask me to send them a leader, I will do so occasionally. In this words, we find, Sir, that in the Wairarapa district more land is required, and also in the Hawke's Bay District. And if you look at the census returns you will see that that district And who should walk into the lobby and support and continue the policy of the greatest good for the greatest number. The land is there; and our policy should be that men, women, and children is demanded, and we should meet that It is plain to me—and it is all in this Statement—it is as plain to me as noonday that if we are to meet the requirements of the people of the a proper position we must have steamers that will carry our products to the various ports of the world. We can afford to build or purchase steamers ; and we can get our money as cheaply as any shipbuilding company in the world. I say that these ships can be manned and maintained by the colony equally as well as they can by private enterprise ; and if you carry and assist your railways on the land, 9.30. the result will be that your producers will be masters of the situation, instead of, as at .

<page:92>

the present time, being first under the thumb of the shipping rings, and secondly in the hands of the middlemen. Then, there is no provision made at the present time for meeting the necessities when our produce gets to London and the other markets; and, as I said here last session, it would be money well spent to establish cool stores at the Cape, and it would be a wise and judicious expenditure to meet the requirements in the Mother-country and to have New Zealand produce put before the consumers of the Old World on such terms and conditions as will do justice to our producers. Sir, I say it follows as a natural sequence. We have laid down the foundation. We put people on the land. We give facilities by roads and by railways. We give the settlers cheap money. We do all that is possible to promote settlement and to increase the number of producers. Our exports for last year are a record for the colony. But I say, whilst you are doing all this, you must let your producers have the benefit of their toil. You must allow the State to profit by what you have done at home, and the only way you can do that is to break down these monopolies and see that your producers have justice abroad. Then, Sir, in this policy outlined we have laid down that the unfortunate bank-clerks—the white slaves of the banks and the white slaves of the merchants—shall not be brought back as they are brought night after night to be worked out of existence on some miserable pittance. I say, Sir, that is a necessity we must meet. We have done a great deal for those in our factories and in shops, and we have done a great deal for the seamen under our shipping laws, and I say now we must do something in the direction indicated in this Speech, and which I have just mentioned. Sir, we are told that it means that some of the holidays which we now give to the bank-clerk will be taken from them. Sir, the bank-clerks will be very glad to be placed on the same footing as others. In my opinion, the banks will have to close anyhow on the statutory holidays as they do now to meet the public convenience. An Hon. MEMBER. - What about Sunday work ? Mr. SEDDON .- Well, if they are working on Sundays it is the more to be deplored. If the evil exists, it can be remedied, I think, without going to extremes or causing irritation. However, I am pleased to find the House is unanimous

in this respect. Now, Sir, during this debate certain matters have arisen that require explanation. Members on our own side of the House have placed matters on record which I think it is only just and right to them and to the country to set at rest, and to show that they are entirely in error in the conclusions they have arrived at. The senior member for Christchurch City (Mr. Collins) and other speakers have gone into the question of defence, more particularly in regard to our Volunteers not being up-to-date and in regard to their weapons. Well, Sir, there has been no remissness on the part of the Government in this respect. You will have noticed, in a speech by Mr. Balfour, the condition in which they were reduced in respect of small-arms and small-arms ammunition at Home, and when we sent our orders Home for the magazine rifles months ago they were not able to supply them. Honourable members will know the reason why. It was impossible, under the then existing state of things, to fulfil that order, but that was no fault of this colony. Our orders were sent Home months and months ago-some of our orders were sent before the South African war started. Mr. J. ALLEN .- For magazine rifles ? Mr. SEDDON .- No, not for magazine rifles. But what is the position to-day, Sir. I told the House last session, when the question was raised, that it would not be wise for me to disclose the position. It is unwise to disclose when you are weak ; when you are strong you do not fear to do so. There are now in the colony 4,500 rifles of the .303 pattern ; there are 18,300 magazine rifles and 1,500 carbines ordered. We have already received 2,800 magazine rifles, and there have been shipped by the " Waiwera," 500; by the "Wakanui," 7,200 ; by the " Aotea," 4,000 ; and by the " Kumara," 3,800: making a total of 18,300, and also 1,000 carbines; so that, in a very short time, we shall have a total of 24,000 in our colony. I think that is a complete answer to any adverse criticism in respect to this matter. I do not blame members for calling attention to it, because it would appear, without explanation, as though there had been some remissness on the part of the Government. Our Volunteer Forces now number about eighteen thousand, so that we shall have in reserve about six thousand rifles. Under these circumstances, I hope members will do the Ministry justice, and that they will see that we have not been at all remiss in respect to this matter. There was one speech delivered which I am bound to refer to-the speech of the honourable member for Riccarton. It was a speech which did not do justice to the honourable gentleman. I think I should best consult my own dignity and position, and the dignity of this House, if I refrain altogether from alluding to the personal matter introduced, and confine myself to the several public matters which he placed before the country and the House in an adverse light. But it would appear to me, Sir, that some explanation is necessary. Members will naturally ask, Why should such an attack be made by the honourable member upon his own leader : what cause is there for it? The honourable member stated during the course of his speech that his remarks were not made in an unfriendly or unkindly manner ; but I think, Sir, that the concluding remarks, and the manner in which he made them, can lead one only to the conclusion that underneath and underlying the whole position was a strong feeling of bitterness, almost approaching to malice. What has caused this change ? I have looked at the honourable gentleman's speech when he was seeking election as the member for Riccarton. He says,- 1 " On every previous occasion there has been a clearly defined issue, but the present Opposi-

<page:93>

tion said, ' Put us into power and we will carry further says "there must ere long be a reconstruction of your policy.' Had they not better trust the construction of the Ministry." That reconstruction men who had not only formed their policy, but has not taken place, and hence the bitterness of had carried it out ? The 'Left Wing' at the speech of last evening. Might I say to the time of its formation "-that is, at the time honourable gentleman that with his ability it is the member for Riccarton formed it-" was a pity there is not more stability. And he must wing of the Government, and in 1894, 1895, admit that with ability the finer feelings of and 1896 it prepared the way for the Old-age mankind are always appreciated, and those who Pensions Bill. But, he said it to their shame, possess them are generally selected and sup- the 'Left

Wing' had since practically joined ported by their fellows. But, Sir, where there the Conservatives in opposing every measure is a want of those finer feelings, and where self- brought forward by the Government. He could ishness is allowed to obtrude and intrude in not possibly ally himself to the 'Left Wing.' defiance of expressed principles, then, Sir, public The Government party was not without fault, men who are so afflicted can never expect to be but when such questions as poverty and higher leaders, or to be placed on the Treasury benches education had to be faced he would go with the of this colony. I speak more in sorrow than in party that would take up reforms, and if re- anger, because I have always admired ability, turned he would vote with Mr. Seddon and the and I always like to help men along; and no Liberal Government. There were only two man can ever accuse me-not even the member lobbies "-mark that-"the Conservative and for Riccarton-of doing him a personal injury, the Liberal. There was no independent lobby or saying a word detrimental to him or to his where a vote of neither ' Aye' nor ' No' must career. be returned." What does the member for Palmerston say Whips to do it. now ? What does the senior member for Wel- lington City say now ? The member for Ric- misjudges me entirely. I did not do so-I carton says, " Their doings were their shame." have never done so ; if I cannot do a thing There was a vote taken the other day : twelve myself, I would not stoop to get any one else to members went into the "Noes" lobby -the do it. That is foreign altogether to my nature. If I have anything against a man, or there is same number as the apostles-and with that anything I dislike, or if I consider it wrong, I twelve, may I remark, it may be inferred there do not want other people to do what I would was a Judas Iscariot. Captain RUSSELL .- And you are his high not do myself. It would probably have been much better, and have rendered my path priest. Mr. SEDDON .- I think I must leave the through life much smoother, if I had taken honour to you on that occasion. that course ; but I always want to be a man, and I will do that, I hope, so long as I have "He deprecated "-mark that-"He depre- breath in my body. In looking up my com- cated the personalities and bitterness intro- duced into politics. With regard to munications, I would remind the honourable the re-election of Mr. Seddon as Premier, his gentleman of this : "I think, after all, your decision is a wise one, and trust you may be own opinion was that Mr. Seddon would con- tinue for a long time to be Premier, and he successful. I will do all in my power to help (Mr. Russell) would do his best to keep him you.". there." Note the effort he made last night to keep me private telegram ? on the Treasury benches. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- To keep you out of Court dress. ing ? Mr. SEDDON .- At the present time I am giving the honourable gentleman a dressing. It would like to remind the honourable gentleman does not finish at that. You would believe that of a time when he was in a peculiar position. after these remarks, and after being elected upon a speech such as I have read extracts from, the honourable gentleman, at all events, gentleman what I believe to be reasons that would have been slightly consistent were it his cause adverse criticism, and if one can give nature to be so. But I find that, even after last reasons for that adverse criticism it takes away session, he met his constituents, and he said the force entirely. If the criticism comes from " he would repay the honour they had conferred any unselfish or from any patriotic motives, by his conduct during his term of office." He then they have great weight ; but if under- went further, and said "there were only two lying it there is either a grievance or & sup- leaders, and those two leaders were Mr. Seddon posed grievance, then those arguments are and Mr. Ward." What was the honourable weakened. I take up that position in this gentleman trying to do last night? Was not respect, and I say it is a sound position. Then, he endeavouring to introduce a third leader ? the honourable member adversely criticized the Yes, Sir, ere the remains of the late leader of appointment of the Royal Commissions. He was the Opposition were cold we find the member not himself a member of any of those Com- for Riccarton endeavouring to force himself as missions. leader upon the benighted party opposite. But, Sir, the honourable gentleman in this speech taken it if you had offered it to me. I could not. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - You get your Mr. SEDDON. - The honourable member Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- Are you reading a Mr. SEDDON .- No, I am not. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- What are you read-

Mr. SEDDON .- Sir, I wish to say this: I An Hon. MEMBER .- Give us some argument. Mr. SEDDON .- I am giving the honourable Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- I would not have
<page:94>

Mr. SEDDON .- Sour grapes ! Incidentally something of the following came to my ears : After all the honourable gentleman's experience, and after the part he had taken in debating the subject of teachers' salaries, who was there who was better fitted? I might also say there was another member of the House who was well fitted for the position : I refer to the member for Ashley. But in selecting a representative from Canterbury upon the Teachers' Salaries Commission, the Government called to the Commission the Chairman of the Canterbury Education Board. There was no offence intended to the honourable member for Riccarton, to the honourable member for Ashley, or to any other member from the Canterbury District. I took a gentleman who had sat on an Education Board for many years, and, under all the circumstances, there is really no reason for saying the Government treated Canterbury differently from other parts of the colony. Then, I come to the question of the Public Revenues Act. The honourable gentleman led the House and the country to believe he opposed that Act. Did he oppose it ? Did the honourable member for Riccarton, I ask, oppose the Public Revenues Act? I say he did not. He voted for going into Committee on that Bill. And again I say, Sir, that that very Act was passed in the interests of the honourable members' constituents, and he would not tomorrow vote against it. Sir, a wrong construction altogether has been placed on the measure. It came to me, as Colonial Treasurer, from the Railway Department. The House had agreed, and it had been urged on the Government and on the Minister for Railways, that we ought to increase the wages of the workmen on our railways, but it was pointed out that, as the railway servants were under classification, we could not pay the money unless the Public Revenues Bill was passed. There is no getting over the fact that the law is as clear as it is possible to make it - that where you have salaries fixed by statute you cannot give an increase, as was suggested in this case. The honourable member mentioned that the other evening, as applying, I think, to Mr. Speaker and, I think, the Chairman of Committees. It was clearly pointed out that, until you had the power that was given in the Public Revenues Act, no increase could be granted ; and, as a matter of fact, the Controller and Auditor-General had stopped increases in the past because there was not the necessary power. That is the complete answer. Even during the last year we have had valuable public servants leaving us because, amongst other reasons, they were tempted by higher salaries which were offered to them from outside the colony ; and I say that in the recess power should be given to act in a case of the kind, and have that action ratified by the House later on. The honourable member must not forget this : He said the payment of the money to the Royal Commissioners was practically an evasion of the Disqualification Act - that the passing of the Public Revenues Act was to enable an evasion of the Disqualification Act. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- " Would enable." Mr. SEDDON .- " Would enable," Sir. But what does Burns say about giving the power to see ourselves as others see us? The spirit of the Disqualification Act is violated by the honourable member every month of his life - and he is not alone - and there is not a word said. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- In what way ? Mr. SEDDON .- The honourable member ought to know better than I do. Sir, I say that the Disqualification Act, instead of being evaded, was bringing into play this question of the appointment of Royal Commissions. It specially provides what shall be paid to members of Parliament when acting on a Commission. Clearly, therefore, the Legislature said that for those outside Parliament you may fix whatever you like as remuneration, but to members of Parliament you can only give £1 a day. I say, therefore, the Disqualification Act intended members of Parliament to go on these Commissions, and properly so too. Sir, the honourable gentleman had something to say adverse to what he terms "the forty-pound grab." Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- I said nothing about it. Mr. SEDDON .- Well, I read it in your speech, sir, and I am quoting your own words - "the forty-pound grab." Do you deny it was said ? Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- No; I mentioned it in my speech. Mr.

SEDDON. - Very well, he who does not fight and runs away lives to grab another day. Did the honourable gentleman vote against it ? Did the honourable gentleman receive it ? An Hon. MEMBER .- You too. Mr. SEDDON .- No, I did not; as I could not draw an honorarium as well as draw a salary. However, sir. I use the words " fight and runs away " advisedly. I looked carefully through Hansard to see how the honourable member divided against the Public Revenues Bill. I find the honourable gentleman was in the House, and voted for its committal, and then he must have left. I find, in regard to the increase given to members, that the honourable member just previously had been in his place in the House, and that he was not there when this division took place. I would like to know, Sir, where- oh ! tell me where-he was then. I come now to the question raised by the honourable member as to the "exhausted condition," I think he said-of initiative in the Ministry. Sir, he has only discovered that since the last general election, and even since that he has admitted there were only two leaders in Parliament. Well, Sir, I want to say this, that over twenty years ago I was supporting a State coal-mine. I have never departed from that. In 1879 I was supporting an increase of honorarium to members-the payment by Act of salaries to members of the House. Look at your Journals for 1879, and you will find where I introduced a Bill for that purpose, supported as it was then by our great leader at the time, the late Sir George Grey; and after 1879 I come back still and say

<page:95>

the country ought to pay its members an adequate salary. I say that £300 a year is not too much to pay members under existing conditions, and in view of the demands made upon them, and when they cannot follow their ordinary avocation without being losers. I say that the State ought to have its best men as representatives, and the State ought to pay its members well. That, Sir, is my contention, and it does not fall to the lot of the honourable member for Riccarton or any other member of the House to say that my action in respect to these matters has been in the slightest way inconsistent. I say, as regards the land- and income-tax, the placing of the people on the land, land - settlement, cheap money, granting the reductions, taking the railways from the Commissioners and giving them back to the people, old-age pensions, and labour laws, which have helped so much to improve the condition of the toilers of this country, I only claim a fair share. I claim that I have consistently supported those matters which I believe to be for the good of the people and of our country ; but there are those who are rash, and who would force upon Parliament extreme measures. If you pass extreme measures there is a recoil, and your reform is lost, and its chance is lost for years. They were talking about these things when I first came into this House in 1879, and before that. And I give a share in bringing about these reforms to the honourable member for Riccarton and the other members who supported us. No one knows better than the honourable member for Riccarton what myself and colleagues went through in forcing these measures on the statute-book of the colony. I only ask that that honourable member and others should do simply what is abstract justice. I will tell him further now, and it can be borne out, that the master spirit of initiative is still at the head of the Ministry, and that two of admitted constructive ability are still on the Treasury benches of New Zealand. The power of initiation is not exhausted. We are gradually and surely forging ahead ; but you must not create unnecessary alarm. Already in the country districts there is a slight fear, and, that being the case, as leader of the Liberal party, and as one whose desire is the well-being of every soul in the country, my foot has to go on the brake. Sometimes harsh terms are applied, but it is better to steer carefully and bring the State coach into safety than have it run over the precipice and be wrecked. Sir, I hope the honourable member for Riccarton will take to heart what I am saying in this respect, and not again do what is unjust. Then, the honourable member, in respect to workmen's homes, made an attack on the Minister of Lands that was entirely unwarranted. The Minister of Lands is in no way to blame for any matter in connection with lands for settlement. I stated to the House last night that since Sir John McKenzie had left the Ministry I had undertaken the business of the

department as re- garded the lands for settlement. Captain RUSSELL .- That is distinctly illegal. Mr. SEDDON .- The honourable member may say so as often as he likes, but he cannot have read the law. The leader of the Opposition ought to be acquainted with the law. I say, Sir, that under the law any Minister can act for another, and there was a special law passed enabling this to be done. Captain RUSSELL .- No. Mr. SEDDON .- That is the honourable mem- ber's opinion, but I say he is wrong. The honourable member for Riccarton said last night that we had only spent £20,000 in the purchase of land last year. What is the fact ? Last year, for workmen's homes 902 acres were pur- chased, and for ordinary settlement 82,974 acres, at a cost of £356,850. A total of 777 farms were established, and 170 workmen's homes. Here is the paper. It is an official document, and I will lay it on the table at the conclusion of my speech. The honourable mem- ber wanted to make out that an injustice had been done to Canterbury. Why, Canterbury, under the Land for Settlements Act, has had more money spent in it than any other part of the colony, and more workmen's homes have been established there. The honourable mem- ber himself recommended the purchase of land near the Islington works. There are two or three areas of land there. One was bought by Mr. Wilson ; but that was through no fault of the Government. The owner got an offer from the Government, but he evidently got a better one from Mr. Wilson. Then, in respect to the Coleridge Estate, we made an offer of £36 an acre, and the owner sold it at an increased price. But we have succeeded in getting one estate there. If the honourable member had asked me for information I would have placed the files at his disposal. It is not fair to have imaginary cases trumped up for the purpose of adverse criticism, and to injure the Govern- ment. I will only say now, in conclusion, that during the debate what we have com- plained of is the want of speaking for the whole colony, and seeing that the best is done in the interests of the people. It has been my duty-and I am sure it has been the duty of my colleagues-to endeavour to lift New Zea- land, and place it in a better position, so that the people of the colony shall have homes, and also to see that the rising generation may hold better positions than their parents. We have in a great measure succeeded in doing that. It is true, this year well-deserved honour has fallen to the lot of my worthy colleague, the Post- master-General, and that four years ago honour also fell to my lot. In so far as the honour- which I think was sarcastically referred to by the leader of the Opposition last night, the member for Hawke's Bay, and by other honour- able members-I may say I was sent Home by you, the people of this colony, to represent you in London. The honour conferred on me was your honour. It was the duty of whoever that honour was conferred upon to conform with whatever was necessary, and to appear, when in high places, properly attired. I am

<page:96>

still, I hope, as true a democrat as I was in the days of my moleskins and nugget boots. It is not the clothes that make the man. I myself have endeavoured to do my duty faith- fully to the people of this country. I shall continue to do so, and nothing will cause me to deviate from that course. I am glad to have almost the unanimous support of the House in what is proposed, and what is before the coun- try ; and in our debates, and in our measures, I say, let the highest possible motives actuate us, and let us with single-mindedness still endeavour to improve upon our legislation. Our administration shall be carefully, wisely, and well attended to; and I will say that, with the great power that is now in the hands of myself and colleagues, with the greater respon- sibility, and, shall I say, the greater confidence of the people, it will behove us to be careful and do our duty faithfully to the people of New Zealand. Now, as a matter of personal ex- planation, I might say, in reference to the statement made by the honourable member for Riccarton that the Government had paid for painting the crest on one of Lane's carriages, that I have placed myself in communication with Mr. Lane, and I have also a communication from the carriage painter who painted the crest on the carriage. Mr. Lane says,- " If any one has stated that Government paid or was to pay, or was expected to pay, for the painting of your crest on my carriage it is incorrect, and without the slightest founda- tion." The carriage-painter in his communication says, -- "I am the pictorial

sign-writer who, for Mr. Lane, put your crest on his carriage. Mr. Lane contracted personally and paid the cash." The statement made, Sir, by the member for Riccarton is without the slightest foundation, and I was astonished when I heard it. Mr. ELL (Christchurch City) .- Sir, several members have been lamenting the fact of the demise of His Majesty's official Opposition. I, Sir, hail the announcement with joy. I regarded an official Opposition as a curse to our politics before I came here, and I have been more convinced of that since I have been here, and for this reason, if for no other : that propositions which have been made emanating from that direction have been counted as coming from the wrong quarter, and so have not been treated on their merits, and that is why I say, Sir, that I hail with joy the announcement that we are not to have in future His Majesty's official Opposition. Mr. SEDDON .- You will have it all the same. Mr. ELL .- We can have criticism as we have had it to-night, the most wholesome criticism that you can get, criticism from all quarters of the House. There have been speeches made to-night by members who count themselves loyal supporters of the Government, and they have been severe in their criticism upon many points in the policy of the Government, and that is as it should be. What I have always regarded as the function of a member is this : that he should come here without being tied down to either the leader of the Opposition or the leader of the Government. Speaking from my convictions with regard to politics and parties, I have always been opposed to members coming into this House pledged to support either one party or the other. I have been very actively engaged in politics since I was a lad of about fifteen or sixteen, and through- out the whole of my career I have always been counted what is known as a "free lance." I was told that as a free lance I would never reach the floor of this House. Well, I am here, and I think I am likely to come here again too ; but, although I came here as a free lance, I venture to say this: that I have consistently supported Liberal measures, and I have given support to propositions which have emanated from the Government with quite as much consistency as those who have been returned as out and out supporters of the Government. I have done that because I believed that the propositions that have emanated from the Executive were right. Now, Sir, I just wish to refer to one or two matters particularly men- tioned by the Premier. The Hon. the Premier said with regard to the Public Revenues Bill that it was necessary to enable the Government to grant certain increases in the salaries of the railway employés. Why, Sir, months before that Act was placed on the statute-book an in- crease had been granted in the wages of railway servants, and it was put down as an extra 6d. Sir, I believe this : that if the House is true to the spirit of democracy, and true to its traditions, it will repeal clause 3 particu- larly of the Act. We had no right to be placed in this position : that we as representa- tives of the people cannot move to increase any salary, and that the whole of that power should rest with the Executive. I will not say the Crown, because the Crown is too frequently put forward in this Chamber, and it tends to blind the community. The Crown is really the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister too frequently claims that the Crown's prerogative is being encroached upon in this direction and that direction. Sir, I say it is the prerogatives of this Chamber that are being encroached upon, and as soon as we recognise the fact that we are in a great measure controlled by the Executive of the country the better. We can- not do as we want to do. Take the question of the old-age pensions. I venture to submit this opinion : that if the mind of the House had been taken absolutely free on a vote to increase the property allowance, it would have been increased last session. I venture this opinion : that there are not ten members in this House, outside the Ministry, who do not believe that it is wrong in principle that a man who gets together a small cottage home worth, say, \$250 should be penalized. We had a case given to us last night by my honourable friend the mem- ber for Christchurch City (Mr. Collins), of an old lady who possessed a small property of £240, and in consequence of being in possession of that she received a paltry #6 a year. But, on the other hand, what are the facts? A man

<page:97>

may squander every cent in his possession, and he will get his £18 a year; but the man who has been

careful, and who has, out of his small earnings, accumulated sufficient to provide a decent home and shelter for his family, will be stripped of his pension ; and that is not the mind and will of this House. And yet we have been told by the Hon. the Premier that the Government represents the representatives of the people, and the mind of the representatives of the people. In this respect he has not done so, and this is not the only case. With regard to initiative by the Ministry, does the Ministry give effect to public opinion when it is ripe? Public opinion had been ripe for years and years on and with regard to the abolition of plural voting in our municipalities, and the Ministry were approached over and over again to put a stop to the power of casting five votes which then existed under our law. But it was not in the interests of the Executive-not, mind, of the party -to bring legislation down on the subject ; and it is just as well to face this fact. The Premier might just as well have been open and frank with the members of this House. It is not always conducive to the interests of the Ministry to advance a reform, although public opinion may be ripe ; it may serve the interests of the Ministry better to hold it over till just before an election. " Keep something in hand to go to the constituencies with, because it helps to get votes, and if we get a majority we shall be able to stick to those benches, and if we do not get a majority we shall not." But, whether we have the present occupants of the Treasury benches here or not, if the people of this colony want a certain policy they will get it, if you give them the opportunity of expressing their minds and will ; but we have so bound up and tied down the electors that they cannot give effect to their mind and will, unless they get the consent of the honourable gentlemen who sit on those benches. What a pitiable spectacle we had here last session, over and over again, members pleading with Ministers in charge of a Bill for certain amendments. What happened in regard to the Land and Income Assessment Bill when we wanted to save native bush from being liable to pay taxes ? The honourable member for Auckland, Mr. Napier, urged that the man who kept 250 acres of bush on his land because he loved the bush should be free from taxation. Would the Minister agree to that ? No. Then, honourable members had to ask him to consent to 50 acres ; but no, he would not. Then, we had to go on our knees and beg him to agree to 25 acres. Yes; he said he would agree to that. But if the Minister had agreed to 500 acres-I say this with all due respect to the members of this House -- the same body of members who went into the lobby and fixed the amount at 25 acres would have followed the Minister into the lobby to fix it at 500. The Prime Minister must confess the truth of what I state; yet he says that the House represents the mind and will of the community. We do not give the community a chance. We pass laws, and put them on our statute-book, and many of them have never been before the community at all. They have never been before the constituencies. What attempt was made last session in regard to the proposed licensing legislation ? The Bill that was brought down here had never been before the constituencies. Was it brought in by the Premier at the wish of the Government party, or where did it come from ? It came from forty representatives of the licensed victuallers in this city, who sent a deputation to the Premier, and wished the term of license to be extended from three to nine years. The trade wanted it fixed at nine years ; and the secretary, who was one of the deputation to the Premier, stated in a report sent to the licensed victuallers' organ in Auckland that they wanted the term to be nine years, but the Premier thought that nine years was too long, that it might be fixed at six. That Bill was not before the country. The Prime Minister stated that we should not go too far, that we must not get beyond public opinion ; and yet a deliberate attempt was made to pass that into law, although I venture to think, if put to the country by referendum the electors would have voted dead against it. That was what happened last year. Then, with regard to the abolition of plural voting in the country districts : the country has been ripe for many years for that. The country has also been ripe for many years past for a remission of taxation. The finances of the country were in a position to have enabled the Government to have remitted that taxation many years ago. When it was remitted the country received the announcement with open arms, and the people wanted more taxation remitted from the necessities of life, and more direct taxation collected ; and I

venture to say that the community would be far better off with more direct taxation and less indirect taxation than there is now. The youngest Minister of the Executive deplored the fact that we had got rid of an official Opposition, and that the honourable member for Hawke's Bay had re- signed his position as leader of the Opposition. I believe the honourable gentleman is a native of New Zealand. Then, I am very sorry that a young New-Zealander should wish to keep in existence a system of government which has not been conducive to the interests of this colony. I hoped he would have been one who would have marched in the direction of getting rid of the "musty, fusty precedents, " because that is what he was bolstering up when he was asking for a continuance of His Majesty's official Opposition. I want to see a young New Zealand party in this country, and if I do not come back again there are plenty of young New- Zealanders who will come in. I want them to start on these lines : that every man who comes to this House shall come in to support certain lines of reform, and shall not be bound down to either follow an official Opposition or an official Ministerial party, but to take for their guide the convictions within them to carry out the pledges they have given to their constituents with regard to measures of reform. I do not suggest that we shall be able to get rid of party

<page:98>

government, and I have never argued that. It would be nonsense to talk about it ; but I do think we should, by such a course, get rid of many of the evils inherent in our pre- sent system of party government. We should then have the honest opinions of members of this House - more honest votes than we get now. There is a great tendency, and an undoubted tendency, in this House to regard propositions coming from the Opposition as un- friendly to the Government. Those who are on the Government side treat propositions coming from the Opposition not on their merits, but, as I said before, on the quarter from which they come, and that is frequently the reason why propositions are placed on our statute-books which are contrary to the real mind and the honest mind of members of this House. The honourable member for Masterton said that he had nothing to reply to. He was lamenting the fact. I believe the honourable member is dis- tinctly opposed to the right of members of this House to elect the Ministry ; while the member for Auckland City (Mr. Fowlds) made a point ' of that, and expressed the opinion that we should have the power of electing the Ministry. Well, . if the member for Masterton wanted something to debate on this occasion, he might have re- plied to the argument advanced by the member for Auckland City (Mr. Fowlds) in support of that proposition. Instead of that, we had him for about half an hour lamenting the fact of the emptiness of the Opposition benches, and he was looking across the table at the few empty . benches, saying, " Where are they ? Where are the people who formerly sat on these benches ?" He also raked up a lot of party history 11.0. and party squabbles that were of no in- terest to the House or to the country, and which served no good purpose by repetition. member for Masterton said that with the growth of education we should get rid entirely of poverty, and the misery of children in poor and wretched homes. I only wish, Sir, that education could accomplish all the honourable gentleman wished for. In this country we have had a free system of education for many years, but, notwithstanding the fact that schools are within easy reach of all our children, our Judges are still lamenting the fact that young New- Zealanders are given to crime to a greater extent than might be expected, considering the opportunities there are round about them. We also have the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Tun- bridge, speaking of the growth of drunkenness in the country, and the records of our hospitals show that a considerable number of persons die annually from chronic alcoholism. The records further show that many persons enter the hospitals suffering from delirium tremens. Last year, in the City of Dunedin alone, twenty- nine persons entered the hospital suffering from chronic alcoholism-the largest number in any part of the colony. Sir, we have more to do than to attend to our educational system. We have a great deal to do in the way of warning our young people of the danger that must result from intemperance ; but, although the Minister of Education has been appealed to over and over again in regard to the matter, he

has not even gone so far as the Education Department of Victoria has gone. That department has had printed at the colony's expense a number of charts setting forth the dangers of intemperance, and the dangers of alcohol as a beverage. These charts are distributed among the schools, and are a standing lesson to the young people. As I say, we have appealed over and over again to the Minister of Education, but we have received no sympathetic response from him. I venture to think, however, that something should be done in the matter, seeing the officials of the Government report that drunkenness is on the increase in the community. Mr. NAPIER .- What is the increase ? Mr. ELL .- In Auckland alone it was seven hundred last year. Now, Sir, I wish to say I am glad the Federation Commission has sat and reported, because I believe that now the people will seriously consider the question. Some of them were disturbed in mind, and awaited the result of the inquiries of that Commission. I am glad the Commission have reported as they have done. I think we in New Zealand will still go on, notwithstanding any Commonwealth tariff that may be raised against us. I consider our progress will be very favourable indeed ; at the same time we shall retain our individuality without having the trouble that has already arisen in the Commonwealth. We know that already there is a conflict between the Federal Parliament and one of the State Parliaments-a trouble similar to that which the United States has experienced for many years past. At any rate there is a dispute at present between the Federal Government and the Parliament of Tasmania, and the question at issue is to be sent to the Federal Judges for their interpretation of the Constitution. I venture this opinion : that had they abolished all their State Legislatures and had only one Legislature for the whole Federation it would then have only consisted of 426 members, as against over 600 in the House of Commons-that it would have been far better for the people of these States, and they would not then have before them the conflicts that they must have under their present position. I venture also to think that they will amend the Constitution under which they are working before they have had very many years' experience of it. With regard to our going to America for railway material, it is a matter of regret that railway goods have been imported to this country when they could have been manufactured in the country. We have all the skill and the necessary energy and constructive ability amongst those directing our railway workshops to turn out the work that we require to be done, and the question simply comes to this : that there was a want of foresight on the part of the Government that they did not provide for that work, when they must have seen what would come about in a few years. I venture to say that, had the Government wished to borrow the necessary amount for the purpose, all they had to do was to come to the House and the House would most readily have

<page:99>

granted it. Instead of that, however, we have | is needed. Now, Sir, we have been told had money sent out of the colony for goods that could have been manufactured here. However, there is no use fighting over that question or arguing about it ; but certainly we should not be spending money out of the colony for goods upon the manufacture of which we could very well employ our own people. With regard to State coal-mines, I am very glad indeed that the Government have at last decided to give effect to what I believe has been the mind of the House for a good many years past-namely, that the Executive should establish a State coal-mine for the supply of coal to the community. With regard to local government in counties, it is proposed to wipe out all the smaller ones. That will not answer. The more nearly the people are placed in touch with their local government, and the more power that is placed in their hands to govern themselves, the better it will be for the people. You teach them thereby to take a warm interest in local affairs, and you teach them to exercise that local control which you cannot expect to have in unwieldy districts. It may be all right to abolish the small boroughs which surround the large cities ; and I believe this would be entirely desirable, because you will then have local interests fostered, and it will facilitate the administration of affairs. But I do not think it at all desirable to wipe out the Road Boards in order to concentrate the power in the hands of larger bodies. In England, as we know, they have, as the

unit of local government, parish Councils, and every village of three hundred inhabitants can have its own Council—a form of government which has been handed down from the old Anglo-Saxon times. And it is curious to see that the Legislature of the Old Country have renewed this old custom on their statute-book : that where there is a parish meeting of less than three hundred inhabitants they can go there and record their votes by a show of hands, and make their by-laws in that way. In fact, they are exercising the same privilege that their fore-fathers had in Kent long before William the Conqueror landed, when they were accustomed . to meet on Pennenden Hill, in Kent, and determine their laws by a show of hands. That is now practised in the parish Councils of the Old Country. We want in New Zealand the Town Boards Act put into operation again. There are many small districts which would be far better managed in that way than by thrusting them into a corner of a large county. We have the case given to us by, I think, the honourable member for Auckland City (Mr. Napier), where he stated that in a district in which he was interested there were a number of houses - a village- and the majority of the members of the County Council had never seen the district. There was a case in point, showing the foolishness of giving a County Council power to govern a district that should be governed by a small local authority. Therefore I hope that provision will be made that, where people desire it, they shall be able to establish a township form of government wherever it to-night that everything is done that should be done and that the people desire, and that the Executive of this House are giving effect to the mind of the House and of the country, and that it is not wise to go too far, and that it is desirable to put down a good heavy foot on the brake so as there should not be a reaction. And it was given as an instance that the country electors had already taken fright, and that unless there was some care exercised there might be trouble between town and country. I do not wish that. I quite agree with the Premier that the town and country representatives should work together heartily and sympathetically for the good of the whole community. But is it in the interests of the country that we should continue to collect over two millions of money through the Customs to carry on the government of the country? Do the country people desire that ? I do not think they do. Do the country people desire that their food and articles of clothing, which cannot possibly be manufactured in this country, should continue to be charged a 25-per-cent. ad valorem duty ? Do they desire that when we could augment our revenue by reducing the income-tax exemption from #300 to \$200 the present high exemption should be retained ? The income-tax exemption is so high in this country that, according to the Commissioner of Taxes, we are losing a considerable amount of revenue from it, and it seems to me to be more statesmanlike on the part of the Executive that they should reduce this exemption, and the land- and income-tax exemption -- if not to dispose of the latter exemption altogether-and use the amount of revenue from these sources in taking off the duty from the commodities of life. By so doing the country people would be much better off ; and the smaller settlers particularly, that some of the country representatives in this House fear may be injured, would not be injured, I venture to say, at all. An increase of 3d. in the pound to a man who is rated on £10 an acre would not be felt at all ; whereas a man with a family would gain distinctly by such a policy. We are taxing the small farmer more by the present system than if we reduced the land-tax exemption from £500 to \$150 and took the duties off the necessities of life. I will take the average invoice rate of these articles that I think should be admitted free of duty altogether. We still pay 25 per cent. on raisins and the same on sultanas, 60 per cent. on currants, 50 per cent. of figs, 100 per cent. on dates, and 50 per cent. on preserved ginger. Now, these fruits are needed by the community, and it seems to me we should not tax these articles as a source of revenue. Then, with regard to cotton piece-goods - pure cotton goods- there is a duty of from 10 to 20 per cent. It is the poorer people who use these cotton goods. The richer class use woollen goods, or mixtures of wool and cotton, and, of course, we must keep a duty on these goods in order to protect our woollen industries. Then. there are cotton counterpanes, handkerchiefs, et cetera; every

poor man's home needs them. Then, there are oilcloths and linoleums, which are used in the poor man's cottage. The rich man has carpets, which are a luxury, and he can well afford to pay the tax. The tax on oilcloth and linoleum is 20 per cent. a value equal to about 22½ per cent., and I do not think it is in the interest of the community that this necessary article of furnishing should be taxed. Then, as to lamps, we cannot manufacture lamps in this country, and yet there is a 20-per-cent. duty on lamps. The Premier said, at Amberley, I think, about eighteen months ago, that they had taken off the duty on cotton goods, and thus benefited the working-classes of the country. They have not done so; they have taken more taxation out of the community since the alteration of the tariff in 1895 on cotton piece-goods than they did before. If the duty had been then taken off there would be a considerable increase in the value of cotton goods imported free of duty, but that is not the case. In 1896 two hundred and ten thousand pounds' worth of cotton piece-goods, free of duty, were imported into this country, and five years afterwards there was only two hundred and ten thousand pounds' worth; but, on the other hand, in the value of cotton piece-goods charged with from 10 to 20 per cent. duty there is an increase—£194,564 imported in 1896 and £249,149 in 1900—showing clearly that, instead of taking less out of the people, the Government are taking a good deal more. This is another direction in which I venture to think it is the undoubted duty of the Executive to move; and, if they did so, I believe they would be giving effect to the wishes of the House if they struck the duty absolutely off cotton piece-goods. There is plenty of money according to the Colonial Treasurer, and he still has a very considerable surplus. I do not think any Colonial Treasurer is justified in collecting more from the people than is absolutely necessary to keep the finances of the country in a healthy state. I am very glad that the right honourable gentleman has at last come to see that it is not a sound economic policy to extract from the pockets of the people by Customs duties large sums of money and use it in the construction of public works. I think we should charge the land with the benefit of the expenditure made to improve it. The land in this country is lightly taxed, and the land-owners have nothing to growl about. With regard to the Fire-brigade Bill, I am glad that the Government have at last proposed to do something in this direction. It is all very well to ask the general taxpayer to provide an improved means of extinguishing fires, and to prevent the spread of fires. That is all very well; but we have to consider this fact: that we are protecting the property of the fire insurance companies. We should have a system of State fire insurance. Will the Minister suggest for a moment that the country farmer and the electors of the colony are not ripe for State fire insurance? The people are ripe for such a system. I think the Government should alter their Referendum Bill by placing the power of initiative in the hands of the people, to provide for that subject being submitted to the people. Without the initiative in the hands of the people the Referendum Bill is not worth the paper it is printed on. Under the initiative let the question of State fire insurance be voted on by the people, and I venture to think there would be an overwhelming majority in favour of it. And here, again, we are told it is not the right time to move, because public opinion is not ripe. Sir, it is not ripe to move because it is not a ripe opportunity for the Ministry. It may be before some election; and a very good election cry it will be. That is the usual course adopted by every Ministry. I am not saying it is the fault of this Ministry only. It is inherent in our system of party government. The Ministry in power only want to preserve their positions, and therefore questions are kept back until some opportunity occurs when it is to the interests of their party and in the interests of those on the Treasury benches to bring it forward. That is the policy that is pursued, and the policy that always will be pursued while you have your present system of party government by Cabinet. Sir, with regard to State fire insurance, we know that a good many of the companies are paying very good dividends indeed. Now, Sir, as to Switzerland, I remember that Sir Joseph Ward, when speaking in Southland, deprecated taking any of our examples from Switzerland. Well, we have a good deal to learn from Switzerland, and we have learnt a good deal from Switzerland. I do not disregard this fact: that the Swiss people were the very earliest people to establish a system of national education; that they were one of the first people to

establish humane factory-laws. Why, we are taking this very proposition-the referendum- the proposition which the Ministry are now bringing before this Chamber-from Switzerland- The same thing applies with regard land. to the initiative. We get that idea also from Switzerland. There is a great deal to be learned from Switzerland. It is of no use anybody suggesting for a moment that there is not something to be learnt from every country ; but Switzerland is a country that has had more attention devoted to it by the greatest scholars and the greatest writers of constitutional history than any other country in the world. Its development has been a most interesting study. In the Zurich Canton, under State insurance, the rate of insurance for a silk-mill is 1s. 10d. to 2s. 9d. per \$100. In Bradford, in the Old Country, on worsted-mills, they charge 8s. per \$100. Sir, I venture to think the rates would be considerably reduced if we had State fire insurance in this country. A certain amount of money from the premiums could be retained and spent by the local authorities in maintaining an efficient fire-brigade service and in paying the fire-brigade men, whose services are at present poorly rewarded-more poorly rewarded than any other public service in this country. They are not paid for the risk they run or for the immense public service they render to the country. Sir, it is a dangerous occupation, and many accidents have happened as the result of the

<page:101>

dangers which they have run in attempting to preserve property from fire and to preserve life, and we are not very greatly rewarding them or acknowledging their great public services to the community. Then, Sir, we have been asking for a betterment system to be put into operation. It has been acknowledged by different members of the Ministry, and it has been acknowledged by the House over and over again, that the unearned increment of the land is the property, or should be the property, of the community which creates it, and they ask that the betterment system ought to be put into operation. It has been promised over and over again, but at last we have got a small compromise. We are asked to give the Executive the power of deciding on the purchase of the land, and that they may take it five years hence at the price to be fixed, say, now. A Bill to some extent in the same direction was introduced in the House of Commons, I think, in 1890, and it received 148 votes there; but the difference was this : They were able to fix upon the same system of purchase, but, instead of limiting the period to five years, the proposition was that they should have the right to purchase any time within twenty years by giving the owners interested the whole of the value of the improvements effected on the land; but they were not to get any of the unearned increment that had accrued to that land in the interval which had elapsed during the time that notice was given. I say that 148 members of the House of Commons affirmed that principle in 1890. With regard to the Fair Rent Bill, I am very glad the Hon. the Minister has given effect to the promise which he distinctly made in this House last session-that he would introduce the Bill. Then, with regard to the land-for-settlements question, the honourable member for Riccarton complained about the price paid for #cc-zero land held by Mr. James Freeman. Well, Sir, I happen to live in that neighbourhood. It is a Road Board district, and I was a member of the Board for some time, and I know the district very well indeed. Land within about half a mile of that is now being sold in three- and four-acre blocks at #75 per acre. Why the Government gave £90 per acre for that land I cannot understand. It seems to me there was some want of judgment on the part of somebody, because undoubtedly the land is not worth it. It will not be a dear bargain in the long-run, but it will seriously hamper the authorities in getting rid of that land, on account of the high rents, and because of the low rents that obtain for land in the immediate neighbourhood. Then, Sir, I wonder how many resolutions and how many letters the Government have had, and how many promises they have made, to stop the sale of Crown lands. I find in every *Gazette*. I pick up, and it has been the same for a considerable time past, that there are lands authorised for sale by the Minister by auction for cash. Not very long ago there was land put up in this way in the neighbourhood of Napier. Now, Napier has a very bright prospect before it. It is a small town, at present surrounded by large estates, and when they become thickly populated they will increase the value of property in the

immediate neighbourhood of Napier. Well, the Government put up land in the neighbourhood and sold it by auction for #160 per acre. I say that is not in accordance with the promises which the Government have made to honourable members. Captain RUSSELL .- Whereabouts is that land ? Mr. ELL .- In the suburbs of Napier. Then, other land was put up at public auction and sold for #40 per acre ; and it struck me as a singular thing indeed that a Liberal Ministry who professed to check the sale of Crown lands should go and sell land in the immediate neighbourhood of a bright and promising town at £160 per acre. Then, in regard to the 11.30. agricultural labourer, it appears to me the Government should do something for the agricultural labourer. I know a district where labouring-men have been asked from £3 1Cs. to £4 10s. an acre for land to grow root-crops, in order to augment their small earnings ; yet the lands in the immediate neighbourhood are let at £1 15s. to £2 an acre. Here is a case in point : My late colleague, Mr. Lewis, urged the Government to purchase a farm in the Halswell district. The land could have been purchased for £40 per acre; it has since been purchased by a private individual for \$46. In that same neighbourhood working men who are only getting 5s. per day are compelled to pay £3 10s. to £4 10s. an acre for land to grow potatoes on. It is wrong on the part of the Government to leave these people without the means of getting land at reasonable rents. They should purchase land in the neighbourhood of villages in the country districts for the benefit of the resident labouring population. I commend this suggestion to the Minister of Lands, and this is not the first time it has been made. Then, we are to have the Factory Act amended, and some provision made whereby the hours of clerks and those engaged in warehouses may be brought within reasonable limits. In many cases they have to go back to work night after night, and sometimes do not even get a week's holiday for the long hours they have to put in without any pay. I hope the Minister will give effect to the promise he made over and over again to the Labour party to introduce an Eight Hours Bill. It had been promised over and over again, but, so far, "No appearance, your Worship." In regard to the public service appointments- I do not wish to set myself up as an example or anything of that sort to honourable members -I believe it has become the practice of honourable members to make their nominations, on the suggestion of the Government, to fill certain vacancies in the different branches of the public service of the colony. I have over and over again had fathers and mothers with sons coming to me, who have assured me that they had put in applications, but that they had been told- mentioning certain Government officials-that unless they had the influence of a member it was not a bit of good putting in an application. Mr. DUNCAN .- The Government cannot find work for all.

<page:102>

Mr. ELL .- I do not ask the Government to do anything unreasonable, and I am not suggesting that they should give employment to the very numerous applications that they receive. Forms of application are required to be filled for the Postal and Telegraph service. There are also printed forms for the Railway service, which require the applicant to get testimonials from two well-known persons as to character, a certificate of educational attainments, and one from the last employer. That is accepted as the applicant's passport, and I think that such applicants should take priority, except in the case of the helpmeet of a widow - the daughter or son who assists a widowed mother. In cases like that I do not think there is any reason why an exception should not be made, and no member would say the Government were doing wrong in making such exceptions ; but in all other cases applicants should be taken from the list according to their positions. I will tell the honourable members my experience of this matter. The Minister gave me an opportunity of nominating two. I telegraphed to Mr. Ronayne asking him for the names of the first two applicants on the list. That was on a Saturday. I waited till three o'clock on the Monday for an answer, but never got it. I then reminded the Manager of my first telegram, and within two hours I got the two names and sent them on to the Minister. I got another nomination about eight or nine months ago, and I took a similar course. I have been in the House for a year and seven months, and in

that time have had three opportunities of nominating five applicants. I have been told by the honourable gentleman that he does not discriminate in these matters of nomination, but that members are allowed the opportunities of nominating whether they are Government supporters or Oppositionists. But what I say is, that if we are allowed to go outside the list of applicants, and if parents have to go to members to get them to open the door of the public service for their children, we are going in the direction of demoralising our electors. If any elector comes to me, and I nominate his son or daughter for a position in the public service, I do not get a political vote but a personal vote, which is wrong. In South Australia it is provided that all applications shall go through a public service bureau ; in New South Wales it is the same ; and Mr. Barton, Federal Prime Minister, in introducing a similar measure, has stated that he did not wish that either Ministers or members should have the power of making nominations to the public service. That is the feeling in the minds of the people here, who wish the same course to be taken. I do not think it is right to go outside the list of applicants in filling any appointments in the public service. Another matter I wish to speak upon is the question of our public debt. I only wish to point out that, according to our Year book, one-third of our ordinary and territorial revenue is taken every year for interest on our public debt. It seems to me, Sir, we have arrived at a time when it should be our duty, as the representatives of the people, to see if we cannot devise some means to check this growth of interest, which is becoming a permanent burden on the taxpayers of the country. Debate adjourned. The House adjourned at twenty minutes to twelve o'clock p.m. #