

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. Wednesday, 3rd July, 1901. First Readings - Address to the King-Sessional

Committees-Address in Reply. The Hon. the SPEAKER took the chair at half- past two o'clock.

PRAYERS. FIRST READINGS. Hospital Nurses Registration Bill, School Attendance Bill, Shops and

Offices Bill.

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ADDRESS TO THE KING. The Hon. the SPEAKER announced that he had presented to His Excellency the Governor the address passed by the Council, and His Excellency had been pleased to say that he would forward it. ## SESSIONAL COMMITTEES. REPORTING DEBATES AND PRINTING. - The Hon. the Speaker, the Hon. Captain Baillie, the Hon. Mr. Feldwick, the Hon. Mr. Jennings, the Hon. Mr. Jones, the Hon. Mr. W. Kelly, the Hon. Mr. Kerr, the Hon. Mr. Rigg, the Hon. Mr. W. C. Smith, and the Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker. STANDING ORDERS .- The Hon. the Speaker, the Hon. Captain Baillie, the Hon. Major Harris, the Hon. Mr. Jones, the Hon. Mr. Pinkerton, the Hon. Mr. A. L. Smith, the Hon. Mr. Twomey, and the Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker. AGRICULTURAL AND PASTORAL INDUSTRIES AND STOCK .- The Hon. Mr. Bowen, the Hon. Major Harris, the Hon. Mr. Johnston, the Hon. Mr. T. Kelly, the Hon. Mr. W. Kelly, the Hon. Mr. McLean, the Hon. Mr. Ormond, the Hon. Mr. A. L. Smith, the Hon. Mr. L. Walker, and the Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker. WASTE LANDS .- The Hon. Mr. Gourley, the Hon. Major Harris, the Hon. Mr. Jones, the Hon. Mr. T. Kelly, the Hon. Mr. McLean, the Hon. Colonel Pitt, the Hon. Mr. Reeves, the Hon. Mr. Shrimski, the Hon. Mr. Stevens, and the Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker. STATUTES REVISION .- The Hon. Mr. Bowen, the Hon. Mr. Feldwick, the Hon. Mr. Johnston, the Hon. Mr. Jones, the Hon. Mr. T. Kelly, the Hon. Mr. Ormond, the Hon. Colonel Pitt, the Hon. Mr. A. L. Smith, the Hon. Mr. Stevens, and the Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker. LABOUR BILLS .- The Hon. Mr. Bonar, the Hon. Mr. Bolt, the Hon. Mr. Bowen, the Hon. Mr. Fraser, the Hon. Mr. Jenkinson, the Hon. Mr. Jennings, the Hon. Mr. McLean, the Hon. Mr. Pinkerton, the Hon. Mr. Rigg, the Hon. Mr. Stevens, the Hon. Mr. Swanson, and the Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker. SELECTION .- The Hon. the Speaker, the Hon. Captain Baillie, the Hon. Mr. Feldwick, the Hon. Mr. Jennings, the Hon. Mr. Jones, the Hon. Mr. T. Kelly, the Hon. Mr. Kerr, the Hon. Mr. Rigg, and the Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker. LIBRARY .- The Hon. the Speaker, the Hon. Mr. Arkwright, the Hon. Mr. Bowen, the Hon. Mr. Fraser, the Hon. Mr. T. Kelly, the Hon. Mr. Kerr, the Hon. Mr. Montgomery, the Hon. Mr. Ormond, the Hon. Mr. Rigg, the Hon. Mr. Scotland, the Hon. Mr. Stevens, and the Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker. HOUSE .- The Hon. the Speaker, the Hon. Captain Baillie, the Hon. Mr. Bowen, the Hon. Mr. W. Kelly, the Hon. Mr. Kerr, the Hon. Mr. Reeves, the Hon. Mr. Rigg, the Hon. Mr. Shrimski, the Hon. Mr. Stevens, the Hon. Mr. L. Walker, and the Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker. LOCAL BILLS .- The Hon. Mr. Barnicoat, the Hon. Mr. Bolt, the Hon. Mr. Feldwick, the Hon. Mr. Fraser, the Hon. Mr. Gourley, the Hon. Mr. Jenkinson, the Hon. Mr. Jennings, the Hon. Mr. Johnston, the Hon. Mr. W. Kelly, the Hon. Mr. Kerr, the Hon. Mr. McLean, the Hon. Captain Morris, the Hon. Mr. Ormond, the Hon. Mr. Peacock, the Hon. Mr. Pinkerton, the Hon. Mr. Scotland, the Hon. Mr. Shrimski, the Hon. Mr. A. L. Smith, the Hon. Mr. Swanson, the Hon. Mr. Twomey, and the Hon. Mr. L. Walker. PUBLIC PETITIONS .- The Hon. Mr. Barnicoat, the Hon. Mr. Bolt, the Hon. Mr. Jenkinson, the Hon. Mr. Pinkerton, the Hon. Mr. Shrimski, the Hon. Mr. W. C. Smith, the Hon. Mr. Swanson, the Hon. Mr. Twomey, and the Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker. ## ADDRESS IN REPLY. The Hon. Mr. KERR .- Mr. Speaker, I move, That the following respectful Address in reply to His Excellency's most gracious Speech at the opening of Parliament be agreed to, and presented to His Excellency the Governor :- " MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,- "We, His Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Council of New Zealand, respectfully thank your Excellency for the Speech you

have been pleased to deliver to both Houses of Parliament. "We deeply deplore the death of Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, and revere her memory as a great and good sovereign. " We desire to present our congratulations to His Majesty King Edward the Seventh, and respectfully wish him many years of life and happiness, and the assurance of his people's love and loyalty. " We, with your Excellency, are pleased to think that the recent visit of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York has been an event worthily carried out so far as the colony is concerned, and we are glad to learn from His Royal Highness's letter to you that he has been pleased with his reception in New Zealand. "We trust our relations with the Australian Commonwealth will always be friendly and kindly ; but we regret that any colony, a contracting party to the Pacific-cable scheme, should have done anything deemed to be inimical to the joint and several interests of the contracting colonies. "We also hope that the Commonwealth of Australia and the other colonies will meet New Zealand in a fair way as regards the penny- postage scheme. "We are glad to hear from your Excellency that the census shows a marked increase in the number of the Maori race, and we trust that advancing knowledge will still further assist the Maoris towards the higher conditions of life which they are naturally suited to fill. " We shall be prepared to attentively consider the several subjects and various Bills mentioned in your Excellency's Speech, as well as any others that may be submitted during the session. " And we join with your Excellency in trusting that our labours may, with God's blessing, tend to promote the welfare and prosperity of

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the people of New Zealand and the good of the Empire." In doing so I wish to make a few remarks in reference to the Governor's Speech. I shall not deal with the whole Speech, but I intend to make a few remarks on certain matters mentioned in it. The first paragraph refers to the death of our gracious Queen Victoria. Our most gracious and virtuous Queen died in the first month of this century, and when the news was known a wave of sympathy and sorrow spread throughout the Empire; and not only through the Empire, but through the whole civilised world. No one who ever lived and acted as king, queen, emperor, or president has been so endeared to the people as was our late gracious Queen. During her lifetime she did her utmost to guard the liberties of the people and raise those institutions which are an honour to the Empire, and to befriend and console with the poor on every occasion. She had the love of all her people, and it is well said in His Excellency's Speech that her grave was watered by the tears of the nation. Sir, it is sad even to think of it. The whole world has, I think, regretted and been sad at the lamentable event. But our grief is somewhat lightened when we know that the worthy son of a worthy mother has been proclaimed King Edward VII. From the example set by his worthy and noble mother we have much to hope that he will follow in her footsteps and dispense such righteous judgment towards his people as his great mother did. Long live the King ! But kings are mortal, and in the course of time he will be gathered to his fathers ; and when that time comes may he have, through his rule and work, brought his people round him in love and devotion, and may the tears of the nation water his grave also. Sir, with the King of England we are in perfect sympathy. He will do nothing to lower the dignity and prestige of our great Empire. I trust after this war is over he will have a long reign of peace, and that he will have opportunities to advance and encourage the people of the great Empire over which he rules. Then, again, we have had our sadness further lightened and our gloom dispelled by the arrival on our shores of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York. It was, I think, a great condescension on their part to leave England at the present time and visit these colonies. Their reception has been grand and magnificent : they have seen the loyalty of the people in these colonies ; they are much pleased, and they have enjoyed their short sojourn amongst us. It would appear from the letter from His Royal Highness the Duke to His Excellency the Governor that he has been much pleased with the people, and the country, and its environments. I trust, if circumstances permit, he will become still further acquainted with the intelligent

and dutiful subjects in this colony over whom he may in future reign. Our loyalty has been shown not only during the last few weeks, but since the commencement of the present South African war. Our colonists have gone forth to battle to uphold the dignity of the Empire-to obtain justice and uphold the dignity of our nation. I could refer more fully to this subject, but I think it is only fair and right to leave that to my gallant and generous friend who is to second the motion. I trust the war in South Africa will soon be over, and that we then shall have a long continuance of peace and prosperity. One grievous matter that threatened this colony not long ago was the bubonic plague. I am glad to think that the wise legislation of last session has warded it off our shores, and I trust the Health Act will be so strictly enforced that we shall not suffer such a pestilence by the carelessness and neglect of any person or persons. I regard the Health Act as one of the best Acts the Government has passed for the preservation of the people of this colony. I shall now refer to the coal mines. A Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into and report upon the working of our coal-measures. I trust they will in their report suggest some scheme that will assist the development of our coal-measures, not only on the West Coast but in other parts of New Zealand. There have been many complaints of the scarcity of coal, not only in Wellington but throughout New Zealand; and I think if Parliament established a State coal-mine it would do some good, not for the purpose of competition only, but to secure for themselves a supply for our railways, our shipping, and other purposes. I have no doubt that there would have been sufficient coal, and we could have very well done without a State coal-mine, if the development of coal on the West Coast had been insisted upon some years ago; but there is now one mine that stands out in prominence, and should be an example to all others-namely, the Westport coal-mine. The management has thoroughly and conscientiously carried on the work for the benefit of the colony ever since the mine was opened. The Westport Coal Company now exports-I think I am near the mark when I say-half a million tons of coal every twelve months, while other mines in the more southern part of Westland do not export one-half that quantity. Now, if the coal-mines in the southern part of Westland were forced to carry out the regulations we would not have the dearth of coal we have now. Coal-measures are lying idle, no work is being done; and what can you expect under the circumstances but a scarcity and a dearth of coal? It occurs to me, and has occurred to me often, to ask, Why has the price of coal increased to the extent it has? From all I can gather and learn, the coal companies have received almost nothing for the investment of their money. I think 5 per cent. is about the maximum that they have received, and for many years they received nothing. The same applies to the mines in the southern part of Westland. They are working there almost without profit. What, then, causes the increase in the price of coal? It is surely not the wages paid to the men who work the coal, for they receive little more than labourers' wages, and we know the precarious and dangerous nature of their calling. I would agree to pay those men more liberally, even if it meant that the mine-owners never

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received one shilling per cent., because I think that the nature of their calling is such that they should be well recompensed for their labour. Why, Sir, those men, when they kiss good-bye to their wives and children on leaving home to go to their labour, feel that it is only by a merciful Providence that they may see them again. Look at the lamentable sight at Kai-tangata, and later on at the Brunner Mine, where sixty poor men were lying round the pit mouth dead, leaving about sixty families unprovided for. My sympathies go out to the coal-miners above all other classes, because the nature of their employment is such that the risks they run should be considered, and they should be well rewarded. Then, if the coal-miner does not profit and the mine-owner does not profit, who does profit by the high price of coal? Is it the ship-owners? Is it the middle-man? I think, Sir, if this Commission which has been appointed can show that there is room for increasing the coal-miners' wages, after allowing a reasonable profit to those who invest their capital in coal-mines, it should be done. As it is likely that some provision will be made to

regulate the working of the coal-mines, I will refrain from further commenting on this matter. Let me now, Sir, in passing, congratulate this Parliament and the country generally upon the success of the penny postage, which I am sure was a step in the right direction. I think Sir Joseph Ward deserves great credit for introducing such a measure and passing it into law. It is to be regretted that the federated colonies of Australia have not seen fit to admit our letters unless surcharged, while foreign nations freely admit our letters without surcharge. But, now that it is recognised we take a lead in progressive legislation, I trust that the federated colonies of Australia will shortly see that it is to the advantage of the mass of their people to have not only the penny postage themselves, but to admit New Zealand's penny letters into their colonies. I am very much pleased to learn that the traffic on our railways is still increasing, and that the Government intend to have their locomotives and rolling-stock constructed in the colony. I think that it is quite right to encourage our own workmen, and to induce skilled artisans to come to the colony and construct these necessary appliances. We should be able to manufacture our locomotives ourselves, and I am quite sure that the construction of locomotives and other rolling-stock is quite within the compass of the people of the colony at the present time. But what pleases me most is to find from His Excellency's Speech that the Government intend to bring forward a scheme to provide for the aged infirm, and people who by accident are prevented from following their occupation. That is to be done in the case of the Railway Department, and also in the Civil Service generally, and I think it is a measure which will commend itself to both rich and poor in this colony. After a life hard spent in the Government service, surely, if the income of our Civil servants is not sufficient to enable them to put something by for their future years, it is our duty to see that they have sufficient to live upon when they are aged and infirm, and I think that the Government will be complimented in bringing forward such a measure. I intend now to mention the lamentable cases that have taken place recently in connection with fires. I think that every care should be taken to provide escapes not only for hotels, but for boarding-houses, and I regard it as rather a pity that such care has not been taken in the past. I see that nightwatchmen are to be insisted upon in future by the Government, and that is a very necessary provision ; but let us have proper watchmen, and let us have "tell-tales" to check the performance of the duties of the watchmen. It is all very well to keep a man at work in a hotel part of the day and all night cleaning boots and doing other work. I ask, How can a man keep his watch and discharge such duties? The chances are that he falls asleep, and the fire-bell is probably the first thing that wakens him. Something should be done in this direction ; and, while it will redound to the credit of the Government if such a measure is passed, it will not impose any great hardship on hotelkeepers. Let it be done, I say, even if we have to give the hotelkeepers a concession of some other kind. I have spoken on the subject of coal, and I will now briefly refer to the dredging industry. Dredging has been a complete success in Otago, and I feel confident it will be successful on the West Coast. Most of the dredges at work on the West Coast are really paying much above working-expenses, and, when the blunders in the way of weak machinery and short ladders, which do not permit the buckets to reach the bottom of the rivers, are corrected, I have no doubt that the dredges will pay excellently all those who have put their money into them. In the meantime gold-dredging ought to be nursed, and every facility given to develop the industry. I am pleased also to learn, in connection with the dredging industry, that the Government intend to bring in a Bill compelling directors to pay their calls as well as shareholders, and that they will be proceeded against if they do not. It is very fine for a director holding a thousand shares to clamour at the outside shareholders, holding perhaps fifty to five hundred shares, to pay calls when they do not pay themselves. An Hon. MEMBER .- That is not so. The Hon. Mr. KERR .- I have heard instances of it having been done. There are several other matters referred to in His Excellency's Speech which doubtless will be attentively considered and debated in Parliament, and therefore I will not detain this Council by making any further remarks on His Excellency's Speech. However, Sir, I hope you will allow me to refer to one matter which gave me, and, I

have no doubt, all the other members of the Council, extreme pleasure, and that was the knighthood of yourself. I think you have well merited that honour, and I trust you will live long to wear it. I also congratulate my friend the Hon. Mr. Walker on having C.M.G. placed after his name, and I also congratulate Sir

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John Mckenzie on the honour conferred upon him. I am particularly happy at being able to call my friend of the last ten years " Sir Henry Miller." I have to thank honourable gentlemen for the kindly hearing they have accorded me. The Hon. Colonel FELDWICK. - Sir, in speaking yesterday to a gentleman who is not a member of this Council, I said to him that the Address in Reply was going to be moved by my honourable friend Mr. Kerr, and that I was perfectly certain that he would propose it in such a way as would give the utmost satisfaction to every member of this Council. I have not been deceived in that respect. I do not wish to make the stereotyped excuse of having " nothing to say," because the Speech from the Throne has such an enormous scope that, if I were a better speaker than I am, I might speak for an hour or more. However, I indorse everything that the Hon. Mr. Kerr said regarding the demise of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, and every sentiment he gave utterance to regarding the love and affection displayed in every part of the colony in relation to Her successor, King Edward the Seventh. As the Hon. Mr. Kerr indicated in the course of his speech, in a very kind manner, he left to me the duty of referring to those we have sent to fight for the nation, to bleed for the nation, and to die for the nation in South Africa. Sir, I think that a more important duty could scarcely have devolved upon any one. . We have sent men to South Africa-we have sent very efficient men to South Africa-and these men, Sir, have been the development of the Volunteer Forces of New Zealand. Many years ago it was quite customary to say of a Volunteer, or of Volunteer officers, that they were "playing at soldiers." Well, Sir, it has not turned out in that way. We were educating soldiers all the while, and we have educated and sent to South Africa men of whom all of us are very proud. Our system in New Zealand was different from that in the Old Country, inasmuch as our Volunteers were kept in harness all the year round. They had their weekly drills, with a trifling recess about Christmastide ; but otherwise these men were very well trained, and I am pleased to know that most of the best men that we sent to South Africa had served in the New Zealand Volunteer Force. The Volunteer Force was not always treated kindly, even by Governments. I remember, Sir, in the year 1879, when the branch of this Legislature which controls the purse embarked on what was known as the "retrenchment " scheme, one of the first things the House struck out was the Volunteer capitation. It was deliberately struck out of the estimates, and Volunteer officers, with various liabilities in the shape of providing for uniforms, and so on, were left with their signatures to promissory-notes, and so forth. However, for the following year the House of Representatives of New Zealand graciously conceded half-capitation. Well, Sir, after that there was a change of Government ; and what happened then ? Under the late Hon. John Ballance not only was the capitation restored, but it was made higher than it was before. From that date came the development of the citizen army of this colony, and of the two or three thousand men who went to South Africa, and who have conferred so much honour and credit on New Zealand. Our Volunteers, Sir, never were "playing at soldiers." I have known them in camps and at all kinds of places, and I have known trouble about food and that kind of thing; I have known of the "burial of the beet," because an instance of that sort occurred in my town of Invercargill twenty years back. I hear that a very bad copy of the incident took place here a few days ago. Of course, none of us approve of that. But there is something that I think we can all be proud of, and that is the display made by the boys-may I say the "kids "-who went down to Christchurch. Their rations did not suit them, but what did they do? They got leave and went into the city and bought their grub in the refreshment-shops, and I think in that respect they set a good example to their seniors. Well, Sir, there are only one or two other remarks I would like to make. I was here during the celebrations in connection

with the Duke's visit, and I was quite astonished to see the display that was made in this town, particularly by the mounted men, a branch of the army that I suppose the colonies have peculiarly developed, especially since the Boer war. I am inclined to think that it is a development, too, that will insure the peace of the world for about five-and-twenty years, because the world will not be fit to fight until then. However, I understand the mounted infantry display made here was completely eclipsed in Christchurch. At one time we used to think that we were a miserable people, unable to defend ourselves against anybody or anything. But we are now quite prepared to hold our own against anything that can be brought against us. I think I have now said all I need on this particular point, except this: that what the Government did in the way of taking our share of the Empire's battles has met with the approval of every man worth calling a man in New Zealand. The action of the Government. I am certain here where I stand, meets with universal approval; and, if there is a discordant note here and there, they are not worth considering. The other subjects alluded to in the Address I do not feel called upon to refer to at all—beyond this: I think the legislation indicated in the Speech is absolutely necessary, and particularly that alluded to by the mover of the Address in Reply—namely, as regards the safety of persons who have to live in hotels. I am glad to see the Hon. Mr. Shrimski has given notice of motion on the subject. My honourable friend was anticipated in the Speech from the Throne by the indication that the Government intended to legislate in this direction. I am certain that every member of the Council will do his best to make this particular law as efficient as possible. As regards the subjects dealt with by Royal Commissions during the recess, I trust we shall have time during the session to read, and consider, and adjudge wisely on their reports. In conclusion, I should like to join with the Hon. Mr. Kerr in congratulating you, Sir, on the honour

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conferred on you by the Crown, also Sir John been sold in my district for 2s., or 2s. 2d., and McKenzie, who is now one of our colleagues, and also the Hon. Mr. W. C. Walker and the Hon. Mr. Cadman. I did hope that this matter would have been dealt with by a special resolution; perhaps it may be yet. The Hon. Mr. TWOMEY.—Sir, there are one or two paragraphs in the Speech to which I should like to refer, and this is my excuse for speaking. But before I do so I wish to congratulate the honourable gentlemen who moved and seconded the motion. To say any more of the honourable gentlemen would be out of place; we all know them, and it is not necessary to welcome them to this Chamber. I hope, also, that if I dispense with any allusions to the patriotic part of the Speech it will not be put down to disloyalty; I do so merely to avoid tediousness, and I trust honourable gentlemen will not attribute it to anything else. I wish, Sir, to join the mover and seconder of the motion in congratulating you and the other recipients of the Royal favours. There is abroad a senseless prejudice against the acceptance of the honour of knighthood, and I think it is time some effort was made to put that prejudice down. It arose and was first created by a gentleman who accepted a title himself. It on the very first opportunity that offered, is supposed that the granting of titles tends to the creation of an aristocracy. Well, I do not know that it would be a very great evil if it were so; but it is not so, it is merely a distinction conferred upon honourable gentlemen for services rendered to the State. Although much higher, titles of this nature stand on the same lines as the presentation of medals and other decorations to soldiers who fight the battles of the country. That is the way I look on titles, and I think it is unreasonable and unreasoning for people to raise a senseless cry against honourable gentlemen, who for services obtained these distinctions. I think it is time a protest was entered against this, for the reason that it sometimes injures the recipients of these favours. There are in the Speech a couple of paragraphs dealing with commerce and cognate things to which I should like to refer. First, there is the expressed intention on the part of the Government to do something to assist the transmission of our products to other markets. I think this ought to be done; and I think that more than this ought to be done to assist the farmers, for the reason that every other occupation is directly assisted except that of the farmer, and I think he ought to be put on an

equal footing with the others. We have protection for our industries to the extent, I believe, of 25 per cent. Our workers have only to appeal to the Arbitration Court and they get a minimum wage fixed. But the farmer has no minimum wage, and I think any man who understands anything about the country will admit that the farmer will not have a living-wage if he has to sell his wheat at 2s. and his oats at 1s. and 1s. 2d.

:The Hon. Mr. JONES .- Give him 3s. instead of 2s. The Hon. Mr. TWOMEY .- Well, wheat has if we only look back we are able to recall with I do not think it is much more now. I say that is not a living-wage to the landowners, and if anything can be done to assist them in placing their products on the markets of the world it ought to be done. There is in the Speech a paragraph which is as follows :- " Recent developments in other countries and in our own colony, in the formation of trusts or combinations with a view of fixing abnormal rates for the purchase and sale of products within the colony, are worthy of attention, and my Advisers are of opinion that the Legisla- ture should, if the evil continues and grows, pass, as a precautionary measure, a law making it illegal for persons, corporations, or companies to enter into contracts or agreements fixing an abnormal price at which foodstuffs or coal within the colony should be sold." Now, I hope that proposal will not be carried beyond what it says as to abnormal prices. Ruskin, in his political letters, lays it down as a fundamental principle that it is necessary for those engaged in industries to combine to- gether so as to prevent cut-throat competition, and I trust that nothing will be done to pre- vent such combination, for the reason that if this cut-throat competition is allowed to go on it is at the very bottom of all distress, and all the low wages; and consequently it is unde- sirable, I think, that anything should be done in the direction of preventing these industries combining together for their own protection in the way that other people combine. Sir, I also think it would be very wise if the police super- annuation scheme were extended to all the Civil Service, and I hope it will be done. The Hon. Mr. W. C. WALKER .- I beg to thank the mover and the seconder of the Address for the kind way in which they have expressed themselves as regards myself ; but I can assure those honourable gentlemen that I look upon the honour conferred upon myself more as an honour conferred on the Council, for it has been my good fortune to lead the Council for some years now, and therefore I feel that any honour I have received is due to the Council, and due to the kind way and man- ner in which it has always received me. I feel sure, Sir, that every member of the Council feels deeply proud at the distinction you have re- ceived at the hands of the sovereign, and, with me, wishes that you may live long to enjoy that honour. As regards the remarks made by the Hon. Mr. Feldwick in connection with the Defence Forces, I indorse pretty well all he said as regards the marvellous development which has taken place within the last few years in connection with our citizen forces. We may well be proud at having such an army of Volunteers as we now have in New Zealand, the efficiency of which has been tested by the outbreak of the South African war, and the calling into active service of our sons and brothers demonstrated what valuable material we have. Not so many years ago it was the fashion to decry the Volunteer Forces in New Zealand. I do not know why, because

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pride the fact that when we were unfortunately fighting with our Maori fellow-citizens on ac- count of land troubles it was from the Volun- teers that the most efficient aid came, and a termination was put to the war. Therefore in New Zealand it always struck me as exceed- ingly strange that there should be any doubt in the mind of anybody as to the efficiency of our Volunteers, and why the services which they could possibly render to their country should be decried. Providentially, the South African war came in time to demonstrate to the full value the quality of the men we were train- ing here in our Volunteer Forces, and I can assure honourable members who were not fortunate enough to be present in Christchurch that it was a very proud spectacle that was exhibited to us there, to see so many thousand men, and so many mounted men particularly, and Volun- teers of all arms of the service, turn out and show the world the fact that the New-Zea- landers were well trained and ready to do their duty to their

country. I have no doubt that our reviews of Volunteer soldiers were probably the most interesting events in connection with the Royal visit, both in Australia and here, as it showed that the Volunteer Forces of the colonies were able to make such a splendid exhibition. As regards the cadets, their muster, too, was a very notable fact. Of course, it may be said that the same thing was witnessed in the other colonies ; but, considering the comparative size of our colony, the display at Christchurch was a very noble one indeed, and showed to our visitors the real character of the training that our sons are getting even in their school days. I trust that the events of the last year or two are simply the commencement of still more encouragement being given, and judicious training to our Volunteers, and that New Zealand will never again despise or deny the possible value of our citizen soldiers. The remarks that have been made by the previous speakers are mostly in the direction of agreeing with the sentiments contained in the Speech, and therefore I do not think it necessary for me to add anything further on the subject. I feel certain that the Council will, as usual, do its best to consider faithfully and carefully any measures proposed to it during the present session, and that our work will be done as well and faithfully as has ever been the case in this Council. Motion agreed to. The Council adjourned at a quarter to four o'clock p.m. ## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. Wednesday, 3rd July, 1901. First Readings-Appointments to Public Departments-Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Act-City of Christchurch - The Patea Electorate - Sessional Committees - Counties Bill - Bush Settlers' Rent- and Taxes-Hanmer Springs- District Health Officers-Kaipara Flats-Wellsford Railway-Waimahaka-Tokonni Railway- "Newtown Park Scandal" - Hotchkiss Guns - Licenses to Sell Guns and Ammunition-Reduction of the Weight of Sacks-Glenham Estate-Sanatorium near Naseby - Railway Siding between Ranfurly and Wedderburn-Address in Reply. Mr. Speaker took the chair at half-past two o'clock p.m. PRAYERS. ## FIRST READINGS. Waimarino County Bill, Miners' Rights Fee Reduction Bill, Wellington Harbour Board Bill, Workers' Right of Appeal Bill, Patea Harbour Board Bill, Elective Executive Bill, Counties Bill, (No. 2), Rabbit Nuisance Bill, Ashburton County Council Empowering Bill, State-school Children Compulsory Drill Bill, Libel Bill, Settlers' Fire Insurance Bill, Eight Hours Bill, Referendum Bill, Rating on Unimproved Values Bill, District Courts Bill (No. 2), Cycle Boards Bill, Statutes Compilation Bill, Law Amendment Bill, Cyanide Process Extension Bill, District Courts (No 1), Shops and Shop-assistants Bill, Bicycle Dealers Registration Bill, Police Offences Bill, Chinese Immigrants Bill, Fair Rent Bill, Orchard and Garden Pests Bill, Public Health Bill, Accidents. on Railways Compensation Bill, Companies Bill .. Mortgages of Land Bill, Government Railways Superannuation Bill, Young Persons Protection Bill, Exportation of Arms Bill, Factories Bill, Statutes Revision Bill, Trustee Amendment Bill, Property Law Amendment Bill, Absolute Majority Bill. ## APPOINTMENTS TO PUBLIC DEPARTMENTS. On the motion of Mr. ARNOLD (Dunedin City), it was ordered, That there be laid before this House a return, in continuation of H. - 5A., 1898, showing, -(1) The number of applications received during the year ended the 31st March, 1901, for employment in (a) the Railway service, (b) the Post and Telegraph Department, and (c) the Defence Department ; (2) the number of appointments made; and (3) the number of applications now on the books. CROWN TENANTS' RENT REBATE ACT. On the motion of Mr. SYMES (Egmont), it was ordered, That there be laid before this House a return showing, -(1) The amount of rebate granted to Crown tenants under "The Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Act, 1900" ; (2) the number of tenants in each land district to which rebate has been granted, giving the annual rent, and the amount of rebate allowed to each ; and (3) the total amount of rebate in each land district. ## CITY OF CHRISTCHURCH. On the motion of Mr. SEDDON (Premier), it was ordered, That Mr. Speaker be directed to issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Writs to make out a new writ for the election of a member of the House of Representatives for the Electoral District of City of Christchurch, in the room of Charles Lewis, Esq., resigned. THE PATEA ELECTORATE. On the motion of Mr. SEDDON (Premier), it was ordered, That Mr. Speaker be directed to

issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Writs to make out a new writ for the election of a member of the House of Representatives for the Electoral District of Patea, in the room of George Hutchison, Esq., resigned.

SESSIONAL COMMITTEES. JOINT ON BILLS. - Mr. W. Fraser, Mr. Graham, Mr. McGuire, Mr. McNab, and Mr. Guinness. SELECTION. - Mr. Hall-Jones, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Hutcheson, Major Steward, and Mr. Guinness. JOINT STANDING ORDERS ON PRIVATE BILLS. - Mr. Hardy, Major Steward, and Mr. Guinness. NATIVE AFFAIRS. - Mr. E. G. Allen, Mr. A. L. D. Fraser, Mr. Gilfedder, Mr. Hall, Mr. Heke, Mr. Houston, Mr. Kaihau, Mr. McGuire, Mr. Monk, Mr. O'Meara, Mr. Parata, Mr. Pere, Captain Russell, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Seddon, Mr. Willis, and Mr. Carroll. GOLDFIELDS AND MINES. - Mr. J. Allen, Mr. Bennet, Mr. Carncross, Mr. Colvin, Mr. Duncan, Mr. W. Fraser, Mr. Gilfedder, Mr. Guinness, Mr. Herries, Mr. Lang, Mr. R. McKenzie, Mr. Millar, Mr. Mills, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Seddon, Mr. E. M. Smith, and Mr. McGowan. HOUSE. - Mr. Speaker, Mr. Bollard, Mr. Colvin, Mr. A. L. D. Fraser, Mr. Herries, Mr. Seddon, Mr. Wilford, Mr. Witheford, and Mr. Carroll. WASTE LANDS. - Mr. Bennet, Mr. Flatman, Mr. Gilfedder, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Hogg, Mr. Lang, Mr. McLachlan, Mr. R. Thompson, Mr. J. W. Thomson, and Mr. Duncan. PETITIONS CLASSIFICATION. - Mr. J. Allen, Mr. Buddo, Mr. Fowlds, Mr. Herries, Mr. McNab, Mr. Monk, Mr. Smith, Mr. Symes, Mr. Willis, and Mr. McGowan. AGRICULTURAL AND PASTORAL. - Mr. Bollard, Mr. Buddo, Mr. Lawry, Mr. Lethbridge, Mr. Massey, Mr. Rhodes, Mr. T. Mackenzie, Major Steward, Mr. Symes, and Mr. Duncan. LIBRARY. - Mr. Speaker, Mr. J. Allen, Mr. Fisher, Mr. Gilfedder, Mr. Guinness, Mr. Herries, Mr. Lethbridge, Major Steward, Mr. Tanner, and Sir J. G. Ward. RAILWAYS. - Mr. Flatman, Mr. Lawry, Mr. Massey, Mr. Morrison, Mr. McGuire, Mr. R. McKenzie, Mr. G. W. Russell, Mr. Tanner, Mr. J. W. Thomson, and Sir J. G. Ward. TRADE AND COMMERCE. - Mr. Bollard, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Hogg, Mr. Houston, Mr. Laurensen, Mr. T. Mackenzie, Mr. McNab, Mr. O'Meara, Mr. Symes, Mr. Witheford, and Sir J. G. Ward. PUBLIC PETITIONS, M to Z. - Mr. Bennet, Mr. Buddo, Mr. Fowlds, Mr. W. Fraser, Mr. McGuire, Mr. Meredith, Mr. Monk, Mr. Morrison, Mr. O'Meara, Mr. Mills. PUBLIC ACCOUNTS. - Mr. J. Allen, Mr. Fisher, Mr. W. Fraser, Mr. Graham, Mr. Guinness, Mr. Morrison, Mr. Palmer, Captain Russell, Sir J. G. Ward, and Mr. Seddon. LAW REVISION. - Mr. Atkinson, Mr. Barclay, Mr. Field, Mr. Hanan, Mr. Palmer, Mr. McNab, Mr. Napier, Major Steward, Mr. Wilford, and Mr. Seddon. STANDING ORDERS. - Mr. Speaker, Mr. Fisher, Mr. W. Fraser, Mr. Guinness, Mr. McGuire, Mr. Palmer, Captain Russell, Major Steward, Mr. Symes, and Mr. Seddon. LABOUR BILLS. - Mr. Arnold, Mr. Bollard, Mr. Collins, Mr. Ell, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Hutcheson, Mr. Laurensen, Mr. Millar, Mr. Morrison, Mr. Palmer, Captain Russell, Mr. Tanner, and Mr. Seddon. PUBLIC PETITIONS, A to L. - Mr. Colvin, Mr. Hall, Mr. Lawry, Mr. Lethbridge, Mr. R. McKenzie, Mr. Rhodes, Mr. Symes, Mr. J. W. Thomson, Mr. Witheford, and Mr. Hall-Jones. LOCAL BILLS. - Mr. E. G. Allen, Mr. Ell, Mr. Graham, Mr. Hall, Mr. Massey, Mr. McGuire, Mr. R. McKenzie, Mr. Millar, Mr. Rhodes, and Mr. Hall-Jones. REPORTING DEBATES AND PRINTING. - Mr. Speaker, Mr. Carncross, Mr. Fisher, Mr. Hornsby, Mr. Lethbridge, Mr. Pirani, Mr. G. W. Russell, Major Steward, Mr. J. W. Thomson, and Mr. Hall-Jones.

COUNTIES BILL. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) gave notice to move, That Standing Order No. 211 be suspended, and that a Select Committee, consisting of thirty-two members, be appointed, to whom shall be referred the Counties Bill, and certain other Bills or matters more particularly referring to local administration affected by the Bill; five to be a quorum: the Committee to consist of Mr. Bennet, Mr. Buddo, Mr. Carncross, Mr. Colvin, Mr. Field, Mr. Flatman, Mr. A. L. D. Fraser, Mr. W. Fraser, Mr. Guinness, Mr. Hall, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Herries, Mr. Hogg, Mr. Houston, Mr. Lang, Mr. Lethbridge, Mr. Massey, Mr. McGuire, Mr. T. Mackenzie, Mr. R. McKenzie, Mr. McLachlan, Mr. McNab, Mr. Meredith, Mr. O'Meara, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Pirani, Mr. Rhodes, Captain Russell, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Symes, Mr. J. W. Thomson, and the mover. He might say that he was not acquainted with all those members who had had experience in the working of the Counties Act and the Road Boards Act. If there were any such whose names had been omitted, and if any member proposed wished to be relieved from serving on the Committee, he would be happy to add the names to the Committee of those

having experience in the working of the Acts referred to. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccarton) said the Premier stated yesterday that he proposed that the Road Boards should send delegates to the conference, as well as County Councils. Mr. SEDDON .- Yes. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL desired to point out that there were nearly two hundred and fifty Road Boards. Mr. SEDDON said there was to be a conference of County Councils, but, as the measure affected Road Boards as well as County Councils, the conference would be more complete if there were also representatives of Road Boards present. He knew there were numerous Road Boards, but there would be no necessity for each separate Road Board to send a representative. The conference would be more complete if representatives of the Road Boards could attend the conference. Mr. TANNER (Avon) would point out to the

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Premier this difficulty : The delegates who would assemble in Wellington in the course of a fortnight were members of an association similar to the Municipal Association. Therefore their business was within themselves ; and it seemed to him that they could hardly welcome the presence. however much they might desire it, The of the representatives of the Road Boards. Road Boards were in no way connected with the County Councils Association. That seemed to be an initial difficulty which would have to be surmounted. He had received communications with respect to the matter, and he desired to be in a position to give a complete answer. Mr. SEDDON suggested that there should be a conference of Road Board representatives, who could sit simultaneously with the County Council Conference. Mr. FLATMAN (Geraldine) asked if the measure would affect Town Boards as well as Road Boards. If so, would they be represented at the Conference ? Mr. SEDDON said the Bill would certainly affect Town Boards, and there would be no objection to their sending delegates the same as the Road Boards. Mr. SPEAKER said that subject could be discussed when the second reading of the Bill or the notice of motion now given were brought up next day. There could be no further discussion at the present stage of giving a notice of motion.

BUSH SETTLERS' RENTS AND TAXES. Mr. R. THOMPSON (Marsden) asked the Minister of Lands, Whether he proposes to amend the Land Act so as to meet the difficulties of bush settlers, who are now compelled to pay rent and taxes on the whole of their sections from the date of selection, by exempting them from paying rent until a portion of their sections are cleared and grassed. Owing to the extreme wet weather of last season a great many selectors in the Province of Auckland who had selected bush lands a year or more ago had not been able to burn the large areas of bush which had been felled on their sections. The result was they were called upon to pay rent and local taxes, while getting no return for the money expended probably for the next two years. He need scarcely point out to the Minister, who was a practical farmer himself, that under such conditions a poor man had no chance whatever of making a start in life, and he hoped the honourable gentleman would see his way to introduce an amendment of the Land Act this session to meet such cases as this. If that was done he believed the very poorest of the northern lands would be readily taken up. In districts such as Hokianga and Mongonui, in the extreme north, there were large areas of poor bush lands which could be made available for settlement if the Minister would introduce such amendments as he had suggested. Mr. DUNCAN (Minister of Lands) said he had a Bill in course of preparation to deal with such matters, and he agreed to a large extent with the statement that had been made by the honourable member for Marsden. They would, however, have to be careful to see that the settlers went on with their improvements and did not delay them too long, because it might lead to speculation in the taking up of bush sections, which might never be grassed, and he intended to provide for that in the Bill. It would relieve them to some extent, because he was himself aware that it was sheer nonsense to ask a man to pay rent if he could get nothing out of the land to pay it. He quite recognised that the time had gone past when people should be expected to work on some other property to pay the rent they ought to be able to make out of the land which they held.

HANMER SPRINGS. Mr. FLATMAN (Geraldine) asked the Minister of Public Health,

Whether it is intended to provide free beds at Hanmer Springs for the use of invalids who, through impecuniosity, are unable to take advantage of using the baths? He thought the time had arrived when free beds should be provided for those who could not afford to pay for the baths at Hanmer Plains. He was well aware that there were free beds at Rotorua, and he was quite sure that if there were free beds provided at Hanmer they would be often occupied by a necessitous people. It was the duty of the State to look after those who were suffering from certain diseases, and who could not get relief in consequence of not being able to pay for it. That was his sole reason for asking this question, and he trusted he would receive a favourable reply. Sir J. G. WARD (Minister of Public Health) quite agreed as to the importance of having free beds provided at Hanmer. So far, the difficulty had been that there was not sufficient accommodation for the people who desired to avail themselves of these baths, many of whom had come long distances. In the meantime, however, he had given instructions to have three free beds provided. It was to be remembered, though, both as regards the free baths at Hanmer and those at Rotorua, that they were not to be indiscriminately used, except in cases where the invalids were unable to pay, or where their friends were unable to pay. That was necessarily the system in force in connection with the sanatoria. Free beds for impecunious cases would be provided at Hanmer, and equal facilities to those at Rotorua would be provided for those desirous of using them. DISTRICT HEALTH OFFICERS. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccarton) asked the Minister of Public Health, Why no District Health Officer has been appointed under "The Public Health Act, 1900"? The Public Health Act was probably the most important Act that was passed last session, and, as honourable gentlemen were aware, it provided not only for a central Health Officer, but also for District Health Officers. These district officers were really the executive officers of the Act, on whom was placed a very large responsibility, and it came as a surprise to him a few weeks

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ago to ascertain that in the part of the colony he came from no District Health Officer had been appointed; and he believed that this was the position not only in Canterbury, but in the rest of the colony. In the meantime, the existing legislation having been repealed, it was necessary and desirable that these officers should be at once appointed. He hoped the Minister would give the House the assurance that such appointments would be made at an early date. Sir J. G. WARD (Minister of Public Health) said the honourable member would recognise that in the working of such a department as that of Public Health it was necessary for them to be very careful in the selection of medical officers. The honourable gentleman was mistaken in supposing that no District Health Officers had been appointed. Dr. Valentine had been travelling a good deal, both in the North and South, and Dr. Pomare, who had been appointed, had also been doing a lot of work. "The reason that no permanent officers had been appointed in the South was the difficulty of obtaining men with the necessary qualifications in medical science. They could not make slipshod appointments, and it was necessary that the general head of the department should make visits to the various centres, as he had been doing, and also to get the assistance of the local Health Officers. He had proposals now for submission to Cabinet for the purpose of appointing one or two more District Health Officers, and as they found men with the necessary qualifications he could assure the honourable gentleman that appointments would be made, as they were anxious to make that branch of the service as complete as possible. Although they had not been able to appoint District Health Officers in some parts of the colony, these places had not been untended to. On the other hand, a good deal of attention had been given to them by the Chief Health Officer and others to whom he had referred. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL said that, as far as Canterbury was concerned, the gentleman who had been doing a great deal of the work had been receiving nothing for his services. Sir J. G. WARD said there was a proposal now before Cabinet for consideration, that this officer should receive remuneration for the work he had had to do. ## KAIPARA FLATS-WELLSFORD RAILWAY. Mr. MONK (Waitemata) asked the Minister for

Public Works, If the route to be taken in the construction of the Kaipara Railway-line betwixt Kaipara Flats and Wellsford has been definitely surveyed ; if not, to what point has the survey been made ? He would just mention that there was an impression that the survey of the Kaipara line had not been finally made and the route definitely laid down. The settlers, however, were very anxious that this question should be immediately settled, in order that they might be in a fair position to have an effective grant made this year for the more rapid construction than hitherto of that line. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) said the route of this line had only been definitely surveyed as far as the end of the Komokoriko Section, the bulk of the work on which was already in hand. It was desirable that further survey-work should be put in hand shortly, and the District Engineer was asked whether he could rearrange his staff so as to release an officer for this work, but replied in the negative. The survey would therefore have to stand over until an engineer could be spared from another district, or an engineer would have to be specially employed for the work. The matter was, of course, under the attention of Government, and they intended to complete the line and get the necessary surveys. WAIMAHAKA-TOKONUI RAILWAY. Mr. McNAB (Mataura) asked the Minister for Public Works, When a start will be made with the construction of the Waimahaka-Tokonui Railway ? Mr. SEDDON (Premier) said instructions were sent to the District Engineer, Dunedin, to make a start with the construction works on the Waimahaka-Tokonui Railway on the 10th May last. Mr. Ussher replied asking whether Mr. Barrowclough, who was engaged in extending the survey further on, was to discontinue survey-work in order to supervise the construction. He was informed by telegram on the 23rd May as follows :- " District Engineer, P.W., Dunedin .- Reply- ing your telegram of 17th, Minister does not intend that Barrowclough should discontinue survey. Minister says you told him Mr. Shain could look after construction work at Waimahaka in addition to what he is doing, and his successor should be able to do same. Please arrange accordingly." Mr. Widdowson, who was to take Mr. Shain's place, had only recently arrived on the ground. He had not heard at present that construction work had been started, but had wired to District Engineer to make inquiries. "NEWTOWN PARK SCANDAL." Mr. MONK (Waitemata) asked the Premier, If he will appoint a parliamentary Committee to inquire and report on the complaints made by the Volunteers respecting their treatment, resulting in what is known as the "Newtown Park scandal," and also with respect to the language said to have been addressed to them by Colonel Penton? His reason for putting this question was that it was evidently desirable that steps should be taken which would prevent the recurrence of the confusion which had been revealed in the recent encampment of Volunteers at Wellington. A system should be devised that would be proof against the irregularities that had resulted in trouble, and which would be unfortunate indeed if our troops were mustered for more serious purposes than we had yet experienced. With regard to the last part of the question, the feeling was that if the language which had been reported in the newspapers had been used to the Volunteers-men who gave their services voluntarily, and who

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provided themselves with valuable horses-animals which were almost as dear to a Volunteer in some cases as a human comrade-well, it was felt that there should be more consideration for such men, and they should not be subjected to such language being used to them as was reported. The feeling was that a Commission should be set up or a parliamentary Committee appointed to report on the matter, and that steps should be taken which would prevent the recurrence of such a thing. That would be for the welfare of the Volunteer Force of New Zealand. It was thought that if such language as had been reported had been used in England there would have been either an ample apology rendered to a prompt demand on the parade-ground or it would have been followed by a court-martial. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) said this matter was not so simple as it appeared, and members would probably appreciate the difficulties of the situation when he put the matter fairly before them. In the first place, there was an alleged deficiency on the part of the contractor who was to supply the troops with food. That was a matter-as to whether there

had been a breach of contract or not-which should be tried by a Magistrate. Certainly he would not pay for food or for service which had not been carried out in accordance with the specifications. That was one phase of the question. He thought the proper way would be to force the situation by letting the aggrieved party take his remedy, or otherwise appoint a Magistrate to deal with the question of supplies in accordance with the contract. Then, there was a second phase of the question, and that was as to some Volunteers having so conducted themselves as to warrant an inquiry under the Defence Act. If there was a grievance such as had been alleged, then the remedy ought to be for the men aggrieved to appeal to their superior officer, and that officer should appeal to his superior officer, and redress should thus be sought. Mr. MONK .- They claim that they did so. Mr. SEDDON could only say this: that it never came before him ; and, as far as knew, it never came before the Commandant. If, therefore, it was true, as alleged, that the offending soldiers-who certainly were inconsiderate, considering the occasion - invaded the precincts of Government House, under those conditions there had been a military offence, and it ought to be dealt with under the Defence Act and the regulations which made provision for it. It was his intention to appoint under the Act and the regulations military officers to make an inquiry and deal with it. He intended to ask Colonel Pitt to act as one officer, and he would be prepared to ask officers from the districts from which the offending men came to act on the inquiry, so that the military inquiry should be strictly impartial, and that the constitution of the Board should be such as would give confidence in their report. He could not go outside the Defence Act. It was a military offence, and the regulations provided how it should be dealt with, and he intended to deal with it accordingly. He might say that on the very day that this arose- and it was right the public should know it- when his Royal Highness had finished presenting the medals at the steps of Parliament Buildings, Colonel Sommerville came to the Commandant and reported that the camp at Newtown Park was under water, and that the horses and men were in such a condition that the camp ought to be struck and other arrangements made. He (Mr. Seddon) heard the Commandant give Colonel Sommerville instructions to have that done; he heard him say, " Go at once and get it done." At three o'clock in the afternoon Major Duncan rang him up on the telephone and said, "What are we to do? The men are here, and the camp is in a deplorable condition, and something ought to be done." He immediately said, "I overheard instructions given to Colonel Sommerville to strike camp and make the best arrangements possible for men and horses. Something has happened and I cannot understand it, but you have my authority and instructions at once to strike camp, and do the best you can for the men and horses under the unfortunate circumstances." He understood that instructions were sent by Colonel Sommerville to the camp to the officer in charge to carry out the Commandant's orders. There had been a failure there. Whether it was on the part of the orderly in charge or the officer he could not say at the moment, but an elaborate report had been furnished by Colonel Sommerville, and that matter, with the other, would be inquired into. Then, the third phase of the question arose - namely, that the Commandant had used language which should not have been so used, and which, if used, would be regrettable in the extreme. Now, who was to try the Commandant ? It was certainly a military offence. The Governor was, of course, the Commander-in-Chief. The Government, through the Defence Minister, might ask the Commandant for an explanation. That was the position. He supposed that if there were military officers of superior standing to the Commandant they might hold an inquiry. At present the situation was surrounded with difficulties. At all events, as Defence Minister, he considered he had a duty to perform to the country and to the Volunteer service, and he intended to perform it ; but he did not think a parliamentary Committee was the proper tribunal to deal with the case. Mr. MEREDITH (Ashley) asked, Why not have a proper inquiry, open to the Press of the colony, so that the whole thing might be ventilated ? Mr. SEDDON replied that there were regulations under the Defence Act, and the laws of the land must be observed. That was the proper course to adopt. HOTCHKISS GUNS. Mr. E. G. ALLEN (Waikouaiti) asked the Minister of Defence, If he can inform the

House when the four Hotchkiss guns promised by Sir William Armstrong's firm to New Zealand will arrive in this colony ? Mr. SEDDON (Minister of Defence) said

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the four Hotchkiss guns which were sent out by Sir William Armstrong's firm to South Africa were, through a misunderstanding from the wording of the telegram making the original offer, considered to be a gift to the colony at the conclusion of the war ; but upon the disbandment of the New Zealand Hotchkiss Battery the company claimed the guns, and said that their offer did not mean a gift, but only that the guns were at the disposal of the Government for purchase should they so desire after the cessation of hostilities. The Government declined, upon the advice of the Commandant, to purchase the guns, and the firm of Sir William Armstrong was so informed. He would only add that, as a gift, the guns would not have been worth much. They would have been four white elephants. ## LICENSES TO SELL GUNS AND AMMUNITION. Mr. MONK (Waitemata) asked the Colonial Secretary, If he will abolish the charge now imposed on storekeepers for licenses to sell guns and ammunition to the Natives ? Some time ago the charge imposed on storekeepers who sold arms and ammunition was abolished, but about the time of the trouble among the Natives in the North, a little more than two years ago, the fee was again imposed. It was a small charge, but it inflicted a hardship on the storekeepers without much advantage to the revenue, and they desired to have it removed. He hoped the Colonial Secretary would see his way to comply with their wishes. Mr. McGOWAN (Minister of Justice) said the charge referred to by the honourable gentleman was imposed in 1898, at the time some trouble arose among the Natives. A charge of the kind was really the only means the Government had to enable them to keep some control over the sale of arms and ammunition to the Natives ; but he could assure the honourable member that he would have inquiries made, and as soon as the Government thought they would be justified in remitting the fee it would be removed. The amount could not be a great hardship on any one - it was only £1 per annum-but before it could be removed inquiries would have to be made. ## REDUCTION OF THE WEIGHT OF SACKS. Mr. FLATMAN (Geraldine) asked the Minister for Railways, Whether anything has been done, or is intended to be done, relative to reducing the weight of sacks of wheat carried on the railways ; and, if not, why not ? They had it on record that men were continually injuring themselves by having to carry heavy quantities of grain in sacks. He put a question on the subject to the Minister last session, and the member for Kaiapoi asked a similar question. The Minister for Railways informed him on that occasion that his answer to the question would be the same as that to the member for Kaiapoi, and that answer was that " the Railway Bill then in circulation would give power to fix the weight of cornsacks and of goods generally as far as the department was concerned." That Bill, however, did not pass ; but, whether a Railway Bill passed or not, he thought that when one was continually hearing complaints from the men, and when in addition one had the evidence of medical men confirming these statements, something should be done at once to reduce the weight of sacks of wheat. He hoped he would receive a favourable reply from the Minister. Sir J. G. WARD (Minister for Railways) quite agreed with the remarks of the honourable gentleman, and said a by-law was now in course of preparation by which the difficulty referred to would be overcome. It was no easy matter to fix a weight that would give satisfaction to every one concerned, but it was generally conceded by those who used the railways, by the labourers, and by those who received the goods that the weight was excessive, and that the time had arrived when it should be reduced. ## GLENHAM ESTATE. Mr. McNAB (Mataura) asked the Premier, If it is correct, as reported in the public Press, that the Government have purchased the Glenham Estate, in Southland ? If it was the case that the Government had purchased the estate, he hoped the Premier would let the House and the country know the price that had been paid for the land. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) said the Glenham Estate had been purchased under the Land for Settlements Act. It contained 11,500 acres, and was acquired for £37,000. Possession would be given towards the end of the year. The estate was situated in

the Survey Districts of Wynd- ham and Toetoes, and at present was divided into paddocks of moderate extent, from 100 to 600 acres. Besides the main homestead, there were six or seven other homesteads of four or five rooms each, with milking-sheds attached, and there was a cheese-factory at the Glenham Railway-station, in the estate. He believed the estate had been bought on the best possible terms. It was land that was well suited for close settlement. SANATORIUM NEAR NASEBY. Mr. T. MACKENZIE (Waihemo) asked the Government, Whether they will at an early date make provision for the erection and main- tenance of a sanatorium in the vicinity of Naseby ? This question was a very serious one to the residents of Naseby. The dreadful disease of consumption was greatly on the increase, and, owing to the excellent climate of Naseby, large numbers of afflicted persons flocked to the town. The residents had cer- tainly no desire that they should come, nor did they wish an institution of the sort he referred to ; but, as these people insisted on flocking there, the residents of Naseby considered that the Government should establish an institution for their reception at a reasonable distance from Dr. the town and under safe conditions. Church had written some most invaluable papers on this subject. It might be said the <page:36>

Public Health Act of last session required the local Health Board to make some such pro- vision, but he presumed the local Board of Health would only be called on to erect an institution for those persons who belonged to the locality, and not for every one who might choose to come to the town. The Go- vernment had already established sanatoria at other places. At Rotorua there was one for skin diseases. The deaths from skin diseases were about fifty per annum, but eight hundred died annually from consumption or other kin- dred complaints. The inhabitants of Naseby hoped the Government would see their way to absolutely prohibit consumptives from going among them, because these people had actually taken the disease into the community. For the first time in the history of that community some people had died from consumption and lung complaints, and the people rightly claimed that either these consumptives should be abso- lutely prevented from going there, or else that such an establishment should be formed as would protect the health of the people from contagion with this disease. Sir J. G. WARD (Minister of Health) must state, in reply to the honourable member, that he did not agree with the latter part of his proposi- tion at all. There were no legitimate grounds for trying to prevent the people of our own country who were unfortunately suffering from these lung complaints from endeavouring to effect remedies where they thought best. On the main question of the erection and mainten- ance of a sanatorium in the vicinity of Naseby, a plan had been prepared with the view of enabling it to be laid before Cabinet for con- sideration. It was a very difficult question, sideration. because there were many sides to it, and the honourable gentleman would readily understand #cc-zero that it was undesirable that a hasty decision should be arrived at. It must be carefully con- sidered by the whole of the Ministers, as well as by the members of the House and by the country itself, before they decided whether a consumptive sanatorium should be erected, and then whether it should be located at Naseby or elsewhere. At any rate, he could assure the honourable member the question was receiving the closest consideration from' the Health De- partment, and also from the members of the Ministry. RAILWAY SIDING BETWEEN RAN- FURLY AND WEDDERBURN. Mr. T. MACKENZIE (Waihemo) asked the Minister for Railways, Whether he will at once favourably consider the propriety of forming a railway siding between Ranfurly and Wedder- burn ? In bringing this question under the notice of the Minister for Railways he felt sure that, had the honourable gentleman had time to visit the Otago Central line, he him- self would have granted this necessary re- quest -namely, to establish a railway-station about half-way between Ranfurly and Wedder- burn. The distance between these two stations was eight miles, and the country was well settled there. Although petition after petition had been sent in in support of this matter, and although the Minister for Public Works recog- nised the necessity for it when he was up there, yet they had the ordinary official rejec- tion on the ground that it was not required. He would like to know what these officials knew about it at all. The settlers were com-

pelled to drive to the station four miles extra for everything. There were main roads converging to the spot ; the land was absolutely level, and hardly any cost would be involved in the formation ; and yet, in spite of all this, they have the official reply that it was not necessary. If one considered what was done in other parts of the colony in the matter of railway-stations, it would be seen that there were strong grounds for urging this request. On the West Coast there were lines where the stations were only a mile apart - nine- teen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty- three, and twenty-four miles. In asking for a railway siding to be erected between points eight miles apart, he submitted it was a reasonable claim, and he hoped the Minister would see his way to act on his own initiative, and not be controlled by his department. Sir J. G. WARD (Minister for Railways) was somewhat afraid that, upon the merits of this case, the gladiatorial exhibition of his honourable friend was scarcely warranted. When he told the honourable member that for three months and a half the tonnage to and from this place, if a siding had been there, would have been 4 tons 14 cwt. inwards and 2 tons 1 cwt. outwards, the honourable member would see the difficulty there was in his giving authority for having a railway siding placed there. He would like to read to the honourable member what the Public Works Department, as well as the Railway Department, experienced. The Public Works Department went into it before the line was taken over by the Working Railways Department, and both departments were advised the siding was not necessary : "This matter had already been fully considered-first, by the Public Works Department in June, 1900, prior to the extension from Ranfurly to Wedderburn being handed over to the Working Railways Department ; and, secondly, by the Working Railways Department in March, 1901, since the Wedderburn extension was taken over. The Public Works Department did not consider a siding between Wedderburn and Ranfurly was necessary, and a return which had been obtained by the Working Railways Department showed the traffic likely to be dealt with at the siding, if constructed, was too small to warrant the opening of a flag-station or siding." He might tell the honourable gentleman that a return was taken of the actual traffic to and from this place for three months and a half, with the result he had given. The honourable member would see that they could not be expected to authorise a railway siding or set up flag- stations unless there was a reasonable amount of traffic. He hoped, however, by - and - by, through the advantages of having an active member for that district, that the railway traffic would so increase as to warrant the erection of

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a railway siding in the place indicated by the honourable gentleman. ADDRESS IN REPLY. Mr. COLLINS (Christchurch City). 7.30. -Mr. Speaker, I rise for the purpose of moving that a respectful Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor. Members of this House will be well acquainted with the nature of the Address to which we listened yesterday ; but I would, before trespassing upon their patience, just point out that I can scarcely, at this stage of my parliamentary career, claim the indulgence of the House. I will at least, however, venture to claim their patience for the very short space of time during which I shall address them. Honourable gentlemen will agree with me, I am certain, that it was natural and to be expected that His Excellency should, in the opening remarks of his Speech, make pointed reference to various events which have occupied the public attention since last we met together. There is no need for me to do more than very briefly refer to those events, inasmuch as the more momentous of them have already received attention at the hands of this honourable House. His Excellency touched first of all upon the death of Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, and drew attention to the fact that that death had been universally lamented not only throughout the British Empire, but throughout the civilised world. He also drew attention to the fact that since last we met a great change had taken place in the colonies of this Southern Hemisphere, and that the birth of the new century saw the sister - colonies of Australia welded together into a Commonwealth. . I undertake to say, Sir, that the birth of a new nation, and the welding together of those separate colonies into a consolidated whole must for all time to come have a very

considerable influence upon the destinies of the colony to which we belong, and I am quite sure that I do but echo the sincere sentiments of every member of this House when I say that we wish unbounded prosperity, success, and continuous progress to that new-born nation, feeling quite sure that every progress which may accrue to the new nation will more or less beneficially affect the well-being of the people of this colony itself. The development of the social conditions and the industrial conditions of the people of a great nation near to us must necessarily stimulate us, and prove the means of exciting and continuously exciting us to greater and nobler efforts. The Australian Commonwealth has become an accomplished fact, and we have had an opportunity - many of us - of participating in those festivities which were necessarily associated with its inauguration. Personally, Sir, I should like, from my place on the floor of this House, to express my gratitude for the manner in which the visitors from this colony were treated by those in the sister State. But, Sir, while so doing I am bound to confess - and the subject is akin to the matter on which I am now speaking - I am bound to confess that I, for one, thoroughly believe that the Commissioners, who have, I believe, presented a report adverse to this colony becoming part of the Commonwealth, have in their judgment but reflected the consensus of opinion of this colony as a whole. Sir, much as I recognise the importance of the birth of a new nation, sincerely as I believe our destinies would be very largely affected by whatever may take place amongst a people so near to us, I am bound to confess that I, for one, cannot see my way clear, and I hope it will be a long time before this House sees its way clear, to commit this colony to a loss of its individual identity as a nation, which loss would, I feel sure, follow as a consequence of our becoming part of the Commonwealth. His Excellency drew our attention to the fact also that we have had a visit from the Imperial troops, troops which came out for the express purpose of participating in the inauguration of the Commonwealth. I think every member will agree that the visit of those troops to these colonies will have a twofold effect. It has not only given an object-lesson to the people of these colonies as to what the Empire has at its command for defensive purposes, but I look at the matter rather perhaps from a more selfish standpoint, and I regard every one of those troopers as a potential advertising agent for this colony when he got back Home; and I feel quite sure that the colony will derive quite as good results from the visit of these troops to the colony as they will from their visit to us. I make these remarks because I want to show that events led up to a very desirable conclusion. We have just had a Royal visit to these shores. It is not my intention to dwell upon that matter; but, Sir, the Royal visitors were so heartily and enthusiastically received from one end of the colony to the other that at least they must have learnt lessons which ought to be of great importance and of great moment to them, for, while they have given honour to the colony through their visit, I feel quite sure that the visit will be fraught with great and important issues to the visitors themselves. One of the correspondents who accompanied the Royal visitors to these shores said at a meeting only a few days ago that one of the advantages of the visit to these colonies would be that it would draw the Mother-country nearer to the colonies, nearer to her children; and, Sir, that is an important matter. For some years past we have been talking a great deal about the necessity of drawing the colonies into closer touch with the Old Country, and events for the last two years have clearly shown how widely awake the colonies are to the necessities of the Mother-land, how closely in touch they are with all that concerns her, how ready and how willing they are to make sacrifices, if sacrifices be necessary, in order to conserve the interests of the Mother-land. Then, within the last two years, circumstances have brought about results which political diplomacy could never have accomplished, for we find, for the first time, the English-speaking people -- the British race-welded together by a common impulse, by a common sacrifice, into a

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whole so strong that we can now be said to be a nation impregnable on the face of the earth. Sir, it does appear to me that the remarks of the correspondent to which I have referred are worth considering; for

assuredly, if it be true that the colonies have shown that they feel their position and their duty, it is equally true that it is absolutely necessary that the Mother-land should understand more fully the conditions of all the colonial possessions, and that she should be drawn nearer to them, and should have come to a clearer understanding of what is required at her hands. Now, Sir, these are matters which are briefly referred to in the introductory remarks of His Excellency's Speech. They are matters which have necessitated a great degree of excitement on the part of the people, and I am quite sure that continuous excitement is not good for any people ; and it is perhaps a good thing, seeing that we have had close on two years of successive pageants, to settle down to the quiet life and steady work which is characteristic of the colony. Passing on, Sir, to the details of the Address, there are one or two matters upon which I will venture to touch. I do not intend by any means to attempt to deal with every matter brought forward in this long Speech from the Throne ; but, Sir, I would like at once to congratulate the Postmaster-General upon the unqualified success which has followed the introduction of the universal penny postage. It must be gratifying to every member of this House to have heard from the Postmaster-General himself that probably within two years' time the revenue of the Postal Department from postage alone will be equal to what it was under the higher rate of postage. We are told that several of the Australian Colonies have not seen their way to adopt the system, use zero and are now surcharging our letters; and, very briefly, I would point out that we have here just one of those indications of the difficulty we would rest under were we a part of that Commonwealth. The inauguration of this uniform system of penny postage would have been an impossibility had we been part of the Commonwealth ; and it appears to me that here alone we see one great advantage of maintaining our individual and independent position. It is perfectly natural that His Excellency should draw attention to the question of defence. We are informed that the estimates for the year will show that, while paying due regard to economy and the requirements of the colony, a normal condition of expenditure in respect to defence is impossible until the war in South Africa is over. I feel quite sure, Sir, that Parliament will be ready and willing to offer every consideration to the Government until the war in South Africa is terminated. The colony, with the full consent of Parliament, committed itself to participate in that war, and I do not think that any member of this House will to-day regret the action Parliament took nearly two years ago. Sir, I, for one, feel proud of the action of our colonial troops in South Africa. I feel proud of what they have done, and I feel equally proud of what they are doing, and I think it redounds to the credit of this colony-a colony so young, a colony which has developed so rapidly, a colony which has been so little known and perhaps less understood by the Mother-land-to have set the example, so rapidly followed by the other colonies, and which has to-day established us as a power of considerable importance so far as help to the Mother-land is concerned. While speaking on this question of defence, I would briefly refer to a scene which took place a few weeks ago, in the city which I have the honour of representing in this House, in connection with the Royal visit. I refer, of course, to the great review in Hagley Park, Christchurch. That review, Sir, was essentially-if I may be pardoned for using the term-an " eye-opener " to a very considerable number of the people of this colony. In the first place, it showed distinctly what ample material we have at our command for present defence; but perhaps even more important, it effectively presented both a prophecy and a guarantee of the future safety of this colony, when we saw rank after rank of juvenile soldiers pass by in the form of our cadets. Those favoured to witness the review and the march past must have been truly astonished at the order and at the soldierly bearing of the troops ; and I, for one, venture to express the hope that the Government will see their way clear to a much greater development of the cadet system in this colony. And, Sir, I believe, and I hope the House will believe me when I say, that I am not affected in any sense of the word by any mere jingoistic spirit. I am not a lover of militarism as such ; but we have to learn this lesson-and we have learned it, I think : that the security of permanent peace is to be found in effective defence. The stronger we are, the greater will be our guarantee for peace. But there is even more than this, and I feel quite sure

that the effect upon the youth of this colony will be of a far-reaching character- I mean the effect so far as training them in the ranks of cadets is concerned -as endowing them not only with a true spirit of patriotism, but to cultivate a spirit of self-control, teaching them obedience, discipline, and self-respect, making them what they should be - citizens who thoroughly understand the duty of citizenship and all that such a duty entails. It should be part of the education of the youth of this colony, and I am quite convinced that the result physically and morally upon the youth of this colony would be beyond all estimate. But, Sir, I am bound to confess that there is just one element of disappointment even in that review, and it was the recognition of the fact, as those troops marched past-splendid men and splendid men in prospective-that those troops were almost exclusively armed with weapons of an obsolete character ; and I venture to hope, Sir, that the Defence Department will see the necessity and the wisdom of at once taking steps to supply our Volunteers with the latest and most up-to- date weapons. It is no use expecting our Volun- teers-men who ungrudgingly give their time, attention, and energy-it is no use expecting them to continue to do this unless the State it-

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self takes an interest in their movements, and at least keeps them supplied with up-to-date weapons. There is no need perhaps for me to say more on this question. The Minister for Railways may be well congratulated upon the fact which His Excellency tells us-that the traffic and the revenue of our railways continue to increase. It appears to me, Sir, there is reason for congratulation in this, inasmuch as such a continuous increase in the traffic and receipts from our railways is at once a pointed and conclusive proof of the reality and solidity of this colony's progress-not only of its pro- gress, but of the solidity and progress of its prosperity. The day has gone by when that prosperity can be longer denied ; and, while I am not so foolish as to suggest or to believe that the whole of that prosperity is due to what is done in this House, at least, Sir, what has been done in this House has not militated against that prosperity, and, had it been the other way about, there is no doubt that this House would have been largely blamed for the position. That being so, we have a right to congratulate the Government upon the permanence of the prosperity which is maintained in this colony. We are told, Sir, that, " with the arrival of the extra locomotives and rolling-stock now on hand and ordered, the requirements of the railways will be fairly met." I am glad the railway authorities saw the necessity of very considerably increas- ing the rolling-stock required. But, Sir, there is just one little matter to which I would draw attention. It is hinted at by His Excellency in his Speech when he says, " At no distant date, both as regards locomotives and rolling-stock, my Ministers hope to have the same constructed within the colony." I hope, Sir, it will be at no distant date. I am fully persuaded that we ought to make our own rolling-stock within our own colony. An Hon. MEMBER .- We should always have done so. Mr. COLLINS .- It is no use now saying it should always have been done. What has been done in the past cannot now be undone, and I am expressing my sincere opinion when I say that whatever can be manufactured in this colony ought to be manufactured within this colony, and we ought not to go outside for a single article or a single ounce of material that can be produced within the colony itself. Sir, it is a well-known fact that our railway-men here can produce as good material. can produce as good locomotives, and as good railway-car- riages as can be produced in any part of the world. An Hon. MEMBER .- Better. Mr. COLLINS .- One honourable gentleman says " Better." Probably he is right ; but, at any rate, I will say that our workers can pro- duce as good as can be produced in any other part of the world. There is no need to say "Better." If we can produce as good, then we have no right to place our orders outside our colony. Our own people must be our first con- sideration. If the plant be insufficient for the completion of orders, let us increase the plant. If the workshops are insufficiently large, let us increase the size of our workshops. There is plenty of material for employment in the colony. Let us have that material employed, and let us have our resources within ourselves. I dislike the impression going abroad-as the impression must have gone abroad when these goods were manufactured outside

the colony- that we are incapable of either producing the material itself or producing it in a short enough space of time. At any rate, we are told it had to be done to meet the requirements, and it has been done, and I only throw this out as a suggestion as to what should be done in the future. I am delighted to find a scheme is to be formulated to provide superannuation and other allowances for railway servants who may be retired from the service on account of age, infirmity, or accident. When Parliament itself provides the machinery whereby an employer is compelled to make at least some provision for an employé who may be injured while working for him, it is surely surprising that Parliament should have paid so little regard to those whom the State itself employs, and I undertake to say the Government must be prepared to do at least as much for its own employés as it compels the private employer to do. I am delighted to find them alive to this question, and I make these remarks in no captious or critical spirit. I say I am unfeignedly delighted that the Government has recognised the necessity for doing as it proposes. We are told the continuous development of the productive capacity of this colony renders it necessary for the extension of our commerce that there should be an increase of facilities for the transmission of our products to other markets. It must be gratifying to every member of this House to know that there is a continuous development of the productive capacity of the colony. I have many times heard from the floor of this House the somewhat well-worn truism of the man being a benefactor who makes two blades of grass grow where only one grew before. There is no doubt, Sir, that the policy pursued by the Government in developing hitherto our untitled lands has marvellously increased the productive capacity of this colony ; and I believe very largely the substantial nature of our progress, and especially of our prosperity, is due to that particular policy. And, that being so, it simply emphasizes the necessity of finding new outlets for our products, and increasing the facilities for the transmission of those products to other markets. I will not weary the House by any lengthy tables of figures-I have some here- but I will just point out, Sir, that our exports have increased enormously during the last five years. In 1895 the total exports of the colony were valued at \$8,390,153. In 1900 the total value of the exports was £13,055,249-an increase since 1895 of £1,665,096. Sir, the increase is so substantial, I take it, as to make it beyond dispute that the increased productive capacity of the colony has been of a very remarkable character. What proposals are to be made to Parliament I do not know, Sir, but, at any rate, proposals are to be submitted to Parliament providing for increased means of transmitting

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these products. Whether it be that the State itself shall subsidise ocean-going steamers to carry our products, or whether the State shall become the owners of steamers to carry that produce, I do not know; but either of these things will have to be done. Either the State will have to sufficiently subsidise steamers to carry, or else the State will have to become the carrying-power itself to transport our produce. Sir, attention has been drawn to the necessity for the establishment of a State coal-mine. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- Hear, hear. Mr. COLLINS .- I do not wonder, Sir, at the honourable member for Riccarton emphatically hear-hearing that point. I congratulate the Government again upon having decided to at least bring this matter prominently before Parliament, and to endeavour to give effect to it. Members of the House will be as fully aware as I am myself of the inordinate prices which, during the last two winters, have been charged for coal. The effect of this has been a very heavy charge upon the State itself, for I suppose the Government is the largest consumer of coal for business purposes ; and, if only for 8.0. its own supply, it would, I think, be of immense advantage to the State if we had a mine from which the State supplies of coal could be drawn. I feel sure, even if the State could see its way to go no further, the result of the State drawing its own supplies from its own mine would very materially reduce the price of coal to consumers generally. Now, Sir, I have had many reasons during the last few weeks for knowing full well how heavily the high price of coal presses upon the poor people. Unfortunately, in spite of our prosperity and progress we still have the poor in our land. This poverty is unostentatious. Sometimes it has to be

looked for to be seen ; but it is an undoubted fact that there is a considerable amount of poverty quietly and courageously borne by a not undeserving class of people-as, for instance, when we find an old pensioner having to dis- burse on coal alone the whole of her pension received during the winter months, and which pension has been cut down under conditions which, by the way, suggest the desirability of still further amending the Old-age Pensions Act. I can hardly refrain from quoting the instance to which I refer, of an elderly lady who is the owner of a cottage valued at £240, and who, being the owner of that cot- tage, has had her pension cut down to £6 per annum. Sir, she had to pay the whole of her winter instalments of that pension in order to secure even a small quantity of coal. For that small amount she would not get, at present rates, nearly sufficient coal to carry her through the winter months. I feel sure, Sir, the House will pardon me for bringing these two matters together. I want to see something done to bring the supply of coal within the reach of even these poor people ; and I want, if possible, to see something done in the direction of at least increasing the pension in cases such as this. where the only crime this poor woman commits is that of having a small cottage which furnishes her with shelter and nothing more. Now, His Mr. Collins Excellency told us in the course of his Address that the labour-laws are to be consolidated and amended, and I was particularly glad to note the direction in which the amendment was to take place. The consolidation of the labour- laws will be the most useful work, and every member of the House will recognise that it is a work which could well be done. I have often said that we could well spend a whole session in consolidating the laws now upon our statute-book, and I believe that such a work ought now to be done. We have statutes scattered here and there, and ques- tions dealt with in such a manner that it is almost impossible to know where some of our laws begin and where they end, and the matter of consolidation is an absolute necessity in order to make our statutes clear and under- standable. But I was particularly glad to find that the Government intend amending and ex- tending our labour-laws so as to regulate the working-hours of those employed in banks and in mercantile houses. This most desirable- object has been gained for the workers in fac- tories, mills, and mines, and it is assuredly time that something were done for the "slaves. of the pen." Perhaps they will hardly thank me for using that term, but, Sir, the hours which some of these users of the pen are worked justifies me in using that term. It. is known full well that there is practically no limit to the hours which some mercantile houses work their employés, and practically no limit to the hours to which some bank clerks. are worked also at certain periods of the year. At any rate, I think we are justified in still further extending this particular legislation to meet these cases. and that bank clerks and clerks in mercantile houses should have their hours of employment regulated. I know, Sir, that a Bill is to be submitted to increase mem- bers' salaries, and I feel, Sir, that I am here treading on particularly delicate ground. I said before, and I say once again, that this is the only proper way of dealing with a matter of this kind ; and, if the salaries of members are to be altered at all from the amount fixed by statute, that alteration should be by statute also. It is the only proper way of dealing with the question. Personally, I still adhere to the opinion I expressed on the floor of this House last session, that a matter of this kind ought to be left to the last days of the Parlia- ment, so that whatever might be done by this Parliament as affecting the salaries of members can apply only to the incoming Parliament. That would mean that the people 1 themselves would have an opportunity of deciding who should or should not come to this House and participate in the altered scale of payment. I am sorry, Sir, to have to differ in this matter from some members of the House,. but assuredly honourable members must credit 1 me with holding my opinions honestly and con- scientiously upon this question. It is with no- \- --- desire to differ either from the Administration or from members of this House, and it is for no purpose of posing as a purist in Parliament. Far be it from me to assume such a position. I

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claim no superiority in any way, shape, or form from other members of this House; but I do feel that, in a

matter of this kind, it is absolutely necessary that one should speak with no hesitation. Sir, another matter of great importance to be dealt with is one which has been very forcibly brought under the notice of the Government and the members of this House during the last few months, and that is the necessity of dealing with the question of coping with these lamentable conflagrations which now and again occur in our larger towns. We are told that conflagrations attended with serious loss of life render it necessary that fire-brigades and fire appliances and water-supply should be rendered more effective and efficient. Sir, I am glad the Government is alive to its duties in this matter. Personally, I think the colony has all too long failed to appreciate the work done by the fire-brigades of the colony. I know of no men who have worked more ungrudgingly, who have worked more unselfishly, in the interests of the State than members of the fire-brigades of the colony ; and hitherto they have received too little recognition at the hands of the State. I think this is at least a matter upon which we can congratulate the Government—that they have decided at last to deal effectively with the question of the complete re-organization of the relation of the fire-brigades of the colony to the State itself. They have been sadly neglected in the past. They have been left to the tender mercies of the local authorities, and in many cases men have been seriously injured in the fulfilment of their duties in connection with the fire-brigades of the various Municipalities—have died at their post, or have been unfortunately killed whilst fulfilling their functions as firemen. And, Sir, what happens? As a rule, it devolves on the people of the particular locality to make some provision for those who are left behind, or, if the fireman is injured, to make some provision for him. As a rule, a private subscription is got up or a public concert is tendered, and I say that this kind of thing ought not to exist longer. It is high time that the State itself at least saw to its duty to make some provision, not only for the effective organization of fire-brigades, but to see that the services rendered by these unselfish workers in the interests of life and property are sufficiently remunerated, and, in the event of accident to life or limb, that at least some adequate provision is made for them. Sir, a Bill is to be introduced, we are told, indemnifying local authorities for the expenses to which they have been put consequent upon the recent Royal visit. I do not think any member of the House will object to this indemnifying and legalising Bill. It was absolutely essential that Municipalities should make fitting arrangements for the reception of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York, and it is only right and proper that we should now pass a Bill indemnifying and legalising the expenditure so incurred. We could have done none other than we have done. That the colony has done so well from one end to the other in this respect is a matter for sincere congratulation. There are other matters referred to in His Excellency's Speech. I have not touched upon many of the points which one might well have considered; there is much here which for a long time will demand the most serious consideration on the part of every member of the House. I do not pretend to have done full justice to the Speech, but I have ventured to point out some of the more salient points connected with the matters to which I have referred ; and I sincerely hope that, in the course of this session, if we do not see much work done we shall see good work done, for I am rather a believer in quality than in quantity, and I hope when the House rises we shall be able to congratulate the Government not only upon the nature of the measures introduced, but upon the details of such of those measures as shall have become law. Mr. WILFORD (Wellington Suburbs) .—Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the motion moved so ably by my honourable friend the member for Christchurch City, and in so doing. I feel that it may be necessary for me to traverse some of the ground he has covered in regard to points which have been referred to by His Excellency the Governor in his Address to the Legislature. I trust the House will pardon me if I may seem to be, in some way, repeating or discussing some of the proposals that have already been discussed by my honourable friend. One of the very first parts of the Speech from the Throne to which I shall refer will be that part which deals with the present mail arrangements between the colony and the Mother-country. It will be well known to honourable members that during last session of Parliament certain resolutions were propounded and

passed by the House relative to granting some kind of a preference in the way of subsidy to an American shipping company presided over by Mr. J. D. Spreckels; and it will be equally in the recollection of members that during the debate that ensued there was a general feeling of regret amongst members that it was necessary, in the interests of the colony, in dealing with the question of subsidising a foreign company which was endeavouring to make profits out of this country, for the time being to put aside that company to which New Zealand owes so much-the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand-in favour- using the words of the American statute-"of a foreign Power." However, honourable members, in discussing the question of the mail arrangements, felt that we had to obtain an improved and a better service, and they felt, if a sacrifice had to be made, even at the expense of a company which employed a great number of hands and was an important company so far as New Zealand was concerned, something had to be done to make the means of communication between this colony and the Old Country constant and rapid, and with the idea of this the resolutions were passed by the House in 1900, and afterwards given effect to by the Government. I would ask honourable members to bear with me for a few moments. while I detail to them the events which led up

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1" --> to this American company poking its nose into New Zealand in the way it has done. Honourable members can ascertain, by referring to the files, that as far back as the 30th September, 1899, Mr. J. D. Spreckels wrote a letter to the Premier of the colony suggesting a twenty-one days' service between this colony and the Mother-country, and he set out, as an argument in favour of this service, the necessity for quickening the speed of the service. It must be admitted that efficient and rapid communication is the basis of industrial life. Mr. J. D. Spreckels suggested that a contract should be entered into between the Oceanic Company and this colony by which a faster service could be obtained, and in the letter, which honourable members will see reprinted in the correspondence referring to the matter in the Appendices to the Journals, Mr. Spreckels said, "We must have a contract," and he in that letter proposed that the Government of the colony should subsidise his company by voting for it the sum of \$30,000. Honourable members will remember that the next thing that was done by the Government was to communicate with Australia, to see whether or not Australia would come into this proposal, and whether it would be prepared to vote some portion of the £30,000 which Mr. Spreckels suggested should be allocated by the Government of this colony or the neighbouring colonies as a subsidy to his service. The Premier of New South Wales refused to be drawn or to agree to any demand until he knew the details of the arrangement; and the result was, through the foresight of the honourable gentleman who occupies a place on the Ministerial benches, no contract was entered into with the Oceanic Company, but the arrangement which was made with it was merely a temporary one. I think it will be found before long-and, in fact, it will be admitted now, and the statement will be borne out by the Press of the colony-that the time has arrived when some radical change should be made in the arrangement which has been come to between the Government and the Oceanic Company. We have shut out our own Union Steamship Company. I prophesy that Parliament will find, probably before many months are past, that there will be such an outcry at the ridiculous way in which these mails are being delivered -or not delivered- and at the delay which has occurred on many occasions, that there will be an absolute consensus of opinion against any further subsidising of this Oceanic Company. The first alternative course is to enter into some contractual relationship with the Commonwealth for the carriage of our mails via Australia to America and England and the Continent of Europe. The chief obstacle in the way of this arrangement is the cost of transshipment. The alternative proposal is the subsidising of a Vancouver service. It is admitted-and one has only to look up the quantity of mail-matter carried to ascertain the facts- that a great quantity of mails which leave England now go via Suez. It will be admitted also, that a number of people in the Old Country are looking askance at this San Francisco service; and I feel sure the Government of the country will

have to tackle this question before long, and will have to see how the anomaly which at present exists can be done away with. Sir, you will remember that a great deal of feeling was exhibited, and rightly so, against the terms that this country had practically to come to under this contract with the American company. You will remember, Sir, that it was then pointed out that under the Hanna-Payne Act, under which special grants by Congress are made by way of subsidy to mail - steamers, Messrs. Spreckels and Company and the Oceanic Company put before the Government the fact that they could not absolutely count on an appropriation, and that therefore before they could enter into any contract they would have to find out how they stood with the United States Government. In the American Act under which the subsidy is granted a special provision provides that no foreign ships-and foreign ships include British ships-are to be allowed to enter into any arrangement or contract for the carriage of the mails with the American company. The result is that the Oceanic Company has to itself the full and absolute monopoly for the carriage of these mails. Now, Sir, how has the company carried out the arrangement so far, and what has been the result of that arrangement ? There have been repeated breakdowns, and there has been no due observance of the sailing dates, and no provision for the employing of vessels to substitute other vessels that were not fit or ready to carry the mails as provided for by the time-table or the schedule of date of sailing of the Oceanic Company itself. The " Sonoma," which was supposed to have left Sydney on the 4th May, stayed in port for nine days to effect repairs. Those repairs were not effected, and the "Sonoma" went to sea without being repaired, and, after going back to San Francisco, was laid up there, and the " Mariposa " took her place at a later date. These are facts and figures which can be seen by any one who takes the trouble to look up the tables. I have only got to quote two or three more instances to show how necessary it is that this service should be looked into. The "Sonoma," due at Auckland on the 19th November, was one day late ; the " Mariposa," due on the 10th December, was two days late ; the "Sierra," due on the 31st December, was four days late; and the "Sonoma," which was due on the 15th April, was three days late. Again, take the due dates of arrival in London. The " Sierra" was once five days late and once four days late, the " Alameda " was three days late, the " Ventura " was five days late, and the "Sonoma" was twelve days late by the time - table. It is plain that this is not a satisfactory service. It was an experiment last session, which has turned out badly. I sincerely hope that the indication given in His Excellency's Speech will be given effect to, and the Government will undertake this matter, and effectually grapple with what is at present a disjointed service. I congratulate the Postmaster - General on the

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penny-postage scheme-every one will congratulate him upon that-and I do not intend to go into the matter except to say that it is matter for general commendation all round. I can say, as one individual member, that some tribute for the energy, foresight, and determination of the Postmaster-General was paid to him in the honour which was conferred upon him the other day, and upon which I have great pleasure in congratulating him. Sir, we read in His Excellency's Speech a reference to the cheap - money scheme and the land - for - settlements scheme. It is universally admitted, and it is generally agreed that the schemes of land - settlement and cheap money are workable, proper, and good for the country. Sir, the old arguments in reference to those schemes need not be recapitulated here; but in the acquisition of private lands for settlement there is one fact which should not be lost sight of, and that is this : The Government of this country have under their control, and under the Assets Board, some properties already in their hands which are able to be cut up, and which should be cut up at once. Only two weeks ago I had an opportunity of travelling round a very large estate belonging to the Assets Board, known as the Upton Downs Estate, and the Weld Hills Estate. Honourable gentlemen will know that about twenty to twenty-five miles from Blenheim there is a large property which was originally known as the Starborough Estate, which has been cut up into sections. Next to that estate is another property known as

the Richmond Brook Estate, and between the Richmond Brook Estate and the Upton Downs Estate there is a stream called the Richmond Brook, and between the Upton Downs Estate and the Weld Hills Estate there is a river called the Medway. The whole of this vast property is well watered and well timbered. It is the earnest desire of the people of that district that they may have an opportunity of acquiring it, and I feel sure if the honourable gentleman who is in charge of that branch of the Government can see his way clear to open up this tract of country for close settlement numbers of applicants for the same will immediately be found, not only on the spot itself, but in different parts of New Zealand. Look at the benefit to the people in that particular district. I may further say that large parts of the land are ploughable. As to the price, a valuation was made by a brother to the manager of the Assets Board, and the residents of Blenheim would gladly pay that price and thus obtain possession of the land. The question of railways the honourable member for Christchurch City has touched upon, but there are other questions which concern the Railway service of this colony that he has not addressed himself to at all. I feel sure that these facts have slipped his memory owing to the pressure of time and having so much ground to cover. The railway servants are classified under the Classification Act. It will be remembered that, after that Act was passed, another Bill was introduced, in order, if possible, to smooth over the anomalies which had been found to exist after the original Act was brought into operation. But those anomalies have not yet all been swept away. There are many rough edges and corners still which have got to be smoothed over, and, with the facile brain of the Minister for Railways, I feel sure that either this session or the next session those anomalies will be removed. The honourable gentleman knows what I refer to. I refer principally to the classification of labourers in the Railway Department. There are at present first - class, second- class, and third - class labourers, but I think the sooner those distinctions are swept away the better, for all the men have to do practically the same work. There should be only one class of labourers. During the recent rise in wages which the railway servants obtained, many of the labourers were left out, for they could not come under what was called " the scale." They were classified as third-class labourers, which is practically "no class" at all. An amendment of the Classification Act should be introduced. I must congratulate at once the Minister for Railways for his introduction of a scheme by which something can be paid to those work- men in the railway workshops after retirement. To-day the railway workshop employées are not Civil servants-they do not come under the Civil Service Act, and have not the right to the same benefits as Civil servants. I think a Bill should be brought down and passed by which those who have grown grey in the Railway service, and who are too old, perhaps, to do the work they are asked to do-and who are unable to retire owing to the fact that they cannot do so owing to want of means-should have a sum of money granted to them by the Government of the country, rather than that they should be dependent on the will of the Minister proposing a grant by way of solatium or present at the end of their term of service. Sir, I will next refer to the Counties Bill, which it 8.30. is proposed to introduce this session. I understand the Counties Bill is really another name for the Local Government Bill. Sir, I think in this House it will be admitted that there is too much local government in this colony. There are too many small Councils holding jurisdiction, with a Mayor and so- many Councillors, over a ridiculously small area. I have in my constituency the Melrose Borough Council, the Karori Borough Council, the Onslow Borough Council, the Petone Borough Council, the Lower Hutt Borough Council, and part of the Hutt County Council. It is ridiculous that in such a small area there should be so many local bodies. The expense of running these local Councils would be greatly minimised were they brought under one or two local governments with areas much larger than at present ; and if the object of the Counties Bill is to do away with a great number of these local bodies and substitute one in the place of, say, five or six, a great amount of money will be saved and just as effective work will be done. As to the loans raised locally, we can again congratulate the Government. There is no doubt the raising of those loans locally will have a great deal to do with successfully advertising on the

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London market the resources of this colony. By the means adopted the colony was saved the whole of the payment for underwriting and the cost of commission. I say a great deal of good must be done to the colony ; and it shows the colony is presided over by Ministers who, at any rate, have some foresight. My honourable friend the member for Christchurch City (Mr. Collins) has spoken of the recent visit of their Royal Highnesses to this colony. I shall touch on that question very lightly. During the reception I heard one man say, "I wish it was all over," or some such remark, and some one went so far as to say something about the expense and the style of show that was going on. I turned on that man who had made such a remark and said, " You ought to live in Japan, where you have only to open your mouth to have your head cut off, and then you would understand the benefits of living in a country of peace and quietness." To my mind, Sir, very few people appreciate the conditions under which we live, and very few people appreciate what we get by being an integral part of the British Empire. There is no doubt the effect of the visit of the Duke and Duchess to this colony has, if possible, brought the ties of kinship closer than they were formerly, and in that connection I wish to quote shortly from a speech delivered by Mr. Scott Cranston, at an impromptu Press function in Dunedin, in reply to a toast proposed by the Right Hon. the Premier. He said,- "Mr. Seddon,-If you had felt it your duty to specially float a loan of a million specially for advertising your colony, it would have been but a circumstance compared with what must accrue from the visit of Royalty and representatives of leading English papers. England is ignorant of your colony, its loyalty, its prosperity, its natural beauty, its possibilities. We have, even in our brief visit, had these attractions forced upon us, and even beyond our duty to those who have sent us here we are bound to return to the Mother-land with one greater mission, and that is to compel the people there to appreciate this colony as this colony appreciates them." Sir, that is all I propose to say in reference to the visit we have had. We are fully alive to the importance of it ; we are fully alive to its value. Upon the mere question of its worth to us for the purposes of advertisement it need not be discussed. Upon the question of binding this colony closer to the Mother-country there can be no doubt whatever in the mind of the most sceptical individual. As to the subject of defence my words will be very few. I consider that the latest munitions of war should be exchanged between the Mother country and its dependencies. We should have a mutual reciprocal system of defence. We should have and will have the assistance of the British cruisers. We ought to have, and no doubt will have soon-and the sooner the better-the opportunity of being properly armed ; and I feel sure that if to-morrow any country attempted to send its soldiers to invade this bright little island, and our soldiers were armed with the most recent munitions of war, it would take a foreign country a far longer time to wipe out our soldiers than it is taking us to wipe out the Boers in South Africa. Why, Sir, the thirty years' wars in the Caucasus would be nothing to it. In concluding my speech, I trust I have not been tedious to honourable members. I should like also to say and to place on record the fact that it has not been a surprise to New-Zealanders to note the way the young New-Zealander has acquitted himself in South Africa. It has surprised the world, because they did not know the stuff the young New- Zealander was made of ; but, Sir, it never surprised New Zealand. We knew they had that capacity; and when we saw them take their place as they did in South Africa, and compare in honour, decency, respect, and obedience, and in fearlessness also, with the best from the Mother-country, we felt our hearts glow with triumph and satisfaction, but we were not surprised. We knew that they would be in the thick of the fight, and that they would be found in the van of battle, as we have been in the van of legislative progress. We knew they would uphold the dignity of the colony. We knew they would place one bright red line- one indelible cross-upon the pages of English history, and we knew, whatever they did when they went to South Africa, they would come back honoured and respected by the whole world. Let me describe their doings in verse, illustrating their daring, pluck, and fearlessness :- Yes, that is where you'll find them, Far out across the veldt, Where the shot and shell are flying

And the hardest blows are felt ; Where cannons roar their thunders, Facing death without remorse, You'll find them in the thick of it-The brave New Zealand Horse. Sir, they do not require any tribute from me .. Every honourable member will help the Government in voting what it requires for the purposes of defence and for meeting the extra- ordinary expenditure that has had to be incurred owing to the extraordinary nature of the circumstances that have arisen. Desperate cases require desperate remedies, and the extra- ordinary expense which has had to be incurred must be met with a free hand and no grudging purse. I feel sure that, when the question of the vote which is foreshadowed by the Speech of the Governor is brought down before the House, there will be no difficulty in getting it passed and putting it before the country in the form it ought to be-namely, as an expenditure which we all agree with, and which we feel has been justly incurred. Sir, I thank honourable members for listening so patiently to my remarks in seconding the Address. Captain RUSSELL (Hawke's Bay) - Sir, I intend to imitate the example of the two honourable members who have already addressed you. My speech will be short - far shorter, indeed, than either of theirs. Members can discuss the measures which have been alluded to by His Excellency the Governor in his Speech when they are brought before us in.

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Bills, and then, one by one, I hope they will receive full and careful consideration and fearless discussion before they are allowed to be- The honourable member who came law. seconded the Address, Sir, had no cause to crave our indulgence. It was unnecessary that he should do so ; and if, Sir, the honourable gentleman who proposed the Address in Reply had not cause to crave our indulgence either, he had from the bottom of my heart all the sympathy I could spare him. Sir, he re- presented on this occasion the caged lion. We can all remember how he roared last session, but on this occasion he cooed like any turtle- dove. What has caused this change ? I picture to myself the lion-tamer over on the Ministerial bench taking him in hand and taming him, and we now see the honourable member for Christchurch City no longer roaring like a lion, but tame as any little poodle dog. There were many arguments adduced by the honourable member for Christchurch City which I should like to refute, but, as I have already said, it is not my intention to make a speech on this occasion. Indeed, I have very few words to say at all, and they scarcely are relevant to the Address in Reply. But there again I follow the example which has been set me by the two honourable members who have already addressed you. Their speeches were confined to comments upon the current topics of the day. They were scarcely debating speeches upon the matters contained in the Speech from the Throne. But, Sir, the position I want to emphasize to-night is the attitude which we, as members in opposition, feel ourselves compelled to take. The honourable members of the party with whom I have been accustomed to work for some years, held a meeting this morning. We are called "the Opposition," and we decided, after the most careful and earnest consideration of all the circumstances surrounding our present position, after endeavouring to determine what would be best in the interest of the country, that we could come to no other conclusion than this : that as an organized Opposition at the last election, and for some little time past, we have failed to secure the approbation of the constituencies. No alternative was, then, left to us than that we shall each, in our individual capacity, criticize to the very best of our ability the policy and the administration of the Right Hon. Mr. Seddon. Of course, I allude to that one particular Minister only-that it will be our duty to criticize his policy unfettered by party ties, and as a party no longer made to bear the odium of various Acts of Parliament which we, unfortunately, being so numerically weak, have been unable to prevent, though we disapproved and spoke and voted against them. Now, whatever our political opinions may be on this side of the House-and here I pause for one minute to say that those Old World terms of " Conservative" and " Liberal" have really no real meaning in this country; they are used continually for the purpose of misleading the ignorant, rather than convincing anybody who knows anything about the politics of this country. But, be that as it may, and whatever our political opinions are, this I would say honestly: that we on this side

realise the importance of honest administration and capable government, and though we may differ, many of us, in our views as to the extremes of Liberalism and Conservatism, we are anxious only to do the very best in our power to advance the welfare of New Zealand, and to see that her Government is administered purely and honestly. Sir, any honourable gentlemen who have paid attention-and we all, of course, have paid attention-to the position of parties in this colony must realise that many of the most advanced Liberals are strongly opposed to the present Government; while, upon the other hand, it has been patent to every person during recent times-during the last few weeks -that many of the most prominent persons on the Ministerial side in politics have been addicted to the most exclusive rather than democratic tendencies. And, Sir, under such conditions of things, I would ask why should we endeavour to draw hard-and-fast lines between one section in politics and the other ? But, Sir, I wish to take this occasion to inform the Right Hon. the Premier that this morning, at a meeting of the Opposition party, no leader was elected. Henceforth on the Opposition benches none is greater or less than the other, and in the spirit of democracy all are equal. In my capacity as an old member of the House I shall always be found, I can assure the right honourable gentleman, endeavouring to further and facilitate the business of this House and advance the good government of the country ; but no longer rest upon me the cares, the responsibilities, or the duties of leader of the Opposition. May I be pardoned for going a little further in connection with Conservatism and Liberalism, and say how slender the barrier between Conservative and Liberal in this country is. Sir, I have often asserted, but I scarcely realised - I may say I never hoped, even-that the proof of the absolute accuracy of my assertion would come from the Ministerial bench -from the Ministry who have posed always as the great democratic Ministry of this colony. Sir, five honourable members of this very democratic Ministry have, during a comparatively recent period, accepted titular distinctions. I have pleasure in offering my own personal congratulations to the Hon. Sir Joseph Ward, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George. During the visit of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York it has afforded me intense interest and very considerable amusement to watch the process of evolution by which those two honourable gentlemen, Sir Joseph Ward and the Right Hon. Richard John Seddon, have evolved-have been converted -from socialist democrats to a very clever imitation of much-bedizened society aristocrats. I hope I have drawn attention to the fact that there is really no distinction between one side and the other in politics- when we seek any little distinctions which can be obtained. I hope for the future the bogie of reaction may be set aside once and for ever.

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Mr. MILLS (Minister of Customs) .- So very many important events have taken place since we met here last that I think it is necessary and imperative for me to briefly allude to them. In the first place, I desire to express the deep sorrow which we all felt when our late beloved Queen was called away from among her loving subjects to her last home. As a colonial I wish to say a few words on this point, so as to emphasize the good work which the old pioneers of this colony did in their day by inculcating the pure spirit of loyalty and affection in their children, and teaching them to realise what it meant to have the protection of the great Power under which we have always lived, and to foster a feeling of reverence and love for the head of that great Empire on which the sun never sets. We have also to congratulate our new King, Edward the Seventh, who is now holding the place which our late beloved sovereign held so long and so worthily ; and, judging from the utterances he has made, both before and since his accession to that high position, I am certain the sympathies of the Crown are with every party of this distant colony. I think it has also been plainly shown that the loyalty of the colonists is worthy of all that has been said of them during the last few months, and they have fully demonstrated the fact during the time many of our men have been away in South Africa. Passing from this, we have just had a visit from the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, who have represented Royalty in our colony, and I am sure every one present must have been

more than pleased to welcome them to New Zealand. To meet them, see them, and to recognise the quiet, gentle, and unassuming courtesy with which every one was treated, has been unmistakable evidence of the good feeling which exists between the colony and the Mother-country, and must make us all realise that we are an integral part of that great Empire to which we are all so proud to belong. I have very much pleasure in congratulating the Hon. Sir John McKenzie on accepting the high position he has recently had conferred upon him. There is not a member in the House who could get up and say it is not well deserved, and so we must all feel pleased he has seen fit to accept the honour which we know perfectly well he realises, and will worthily uphold. I have also to congratulate the Hon. Sir Joseph Ward on the high position he has attained, and there can be no doubt that his determined energy has only received a very slight reward in the distinction conferred on him. We know perfectly well what the honourable gentleman has done as a private citizen in this country and as a leading politician, therefore I am very proud to be able to testify here to his ability, and to see that high distinction conferred upon him. I was pleased to have an opportunity of attending the reception at Auckland when the Duke and Duchess arrived, and also the great demonstration at Rotorua, where I witnessed a more than historical sight, being able to contrast what is being done for the Maoris with what was their condition in former times; and I am quite satisfied that, if we lived for another hundred years, we should never see such a unique and interesting sight again. Regarding the distinction between the two races, and the treatment the Natives receive now and that meted out to them at former times, there can be no doubt whatever that the best of feeling exists as between them and the Europeans, and it is a triumph in Imperial colonising to be able to look back and see the result of what has been done for the Natives of New Zealand. Let us contrast the position of the Native race when the first settlers came to the colony and what we have done and are doing now to improve the Maori race. I say that everything possible is being done to preserve and improve that fine race of people. We also had a visit from the Imperial and Indian troops, which was a very great object-lesson, especially to those, like myself, who are New-Zealanders, and who have not had the opportunity of seeing a representative number of soldiers from different parts of the Empire, many of whom had acquired great distinction in the service of the Queen and the Empire. When journeying down south with them it was very pleasing to me to notice how astonished they were to see the progress and capability of the colony; and, judging by the numbers of children who attended at every station to see the men pass, one could hardly imagine that our birth-rate has been decreasing, as we find it is. The soldiers received a warm welcome from the inhabitants in every place they visited, and they were astonished to realise what the fruitfulness of the country was. We also had in connection with the Royal visit a number of high representatives of the Press, and I am very proud to say, after hearing their expressions of opinion—which were given without reservation—that a feeling has been created amongst them which will be lasting and have a good effect on their return to the Old Country; because one and all stated that they were astonished to see the progress of this colony, and what a wonderful country it was; and one can only hope that in time an opportunity will be afforded them to return here again. I regret that they could not go to Milford Sound and the Marlborough Sounds and see the majestic and quiet beauty of both places, but I feel sure that they will carry away with them a vivid recollection of the wondrous scenery they have passed through during their short visit to this colony. In my opinion, it will mean a great increase to the tourist traffic, as people learn what wonderful attractions we have to offer them, and it must mean very great advantages for us later on. The Minister who has charge of that department, I feel certain, will spare no pains in the future to make it what it ought to be. Unfortunately, I was not present when the leader of the Opposition commenced his speech, and with what I have heard I am seriously disappointed. I expected to hear a good round speech occupying an hour, pointing out all the defects in the Address, whereas we have had three speeches in the last hour and a half. That shows me clearly that, so far as the Opposition is concerned, they, like many others, are entirely in accord with what the

Governor's Speech has told them is going to

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take place. Of course, there was no need for the friends of the Liberal party to occupy the time of the House for any great length ; but I can compliment both the mover and seconder of the Address for their well-chosen remarks, and I did expect that the leader of the Opposition would give us, in his usual forcible words, something like a real denunciation of those wicked Liberals who continue to occupy the Treasury benches. However, I came here just in time to hear him give utterance to the greatest democratic truism he has ever uttered in this House, and that was, " We are all equal." Unquestionably so. But the funny thing was the remark he made in reference to the senior member for Christchurch City (Mr. Collins), who, he said, was last session very much like a roaring lion, but was now under the influence of the lion-tamer, and was therefore not his equal. Sir, there is no lion-tamer. An Hon. MEMBER .- No, but there is a tamed lion, Mr. MILLS .- Yes, Sir, and a good many of them among the Opposition; but while there may be one among the Liberals who was expected by others to take up a different attitude to what he holds to-day, because he spoke out very strongly last session, we find that there are something like nineteen or twenty honourable members, who have openly and consistently opposed this party for years, who are now pretty well satisfied with the position of affairs. Why, we will find before the debate on this Address is over that they agree with everything the Government is going to provide this session. So far, I think the honourable senior member for Christchurch City has shown his wisdom in telling the country what he thought about us, and then in proving after all that he may have looked at things from a different point of view, #cc-zero and now sees that things are going on as they ought to go, and that there was nothing better before the country and nothing better that could be done. I have no doubt that some honourable members will tell us that the Speech is too long ; but I leave honourable members to say whether it is not a comprehensive Speech, and whether it does not contain matters worthy of the attention of every honourable member who sits in this House. I say it is ; and the more one looks into it the more information one will find it contains. I admit it is not like what used to obtain under the old system. When I first came into this House I was told that the Governor's Speech should be known for its emptiness- information was conspicuous by its absence ; but the Liberal party has gone outside the old regime altogether, and they come forward with what they believe to be best in the interest of the country, and they prefer to tell it at the very earliest opportunity, so as to allow the people to digest it before the session is many weeks old. I shall look forward with some interest to what our honourable friends in the Opposition will tell us with regard to it ; and, whether they have elected a leader or not, I shall look upon the honourable member for Hawke's Bay still as the leader of the Opposition, and one that I think we cannot improve upon, for, whatever may be his political views, we all have a very high respect for him. Passing onward, I have a few words to say with regard to the penny postage. We have heard nothing from the honourable member with regard to that. Surely that was a matter worthy of his attention. It is most gratifying to know the system has been recognised and adopted by many other countries, but I regret to learn that our Australian cousins have not seen fit to adopt the penny-post system, and that they continue to surcharge our letters. There has been a good deal said with regard to our federating with the Australian Colonies, but, if we may judge from this first attempt to join hands, there does not seem very much encouragement to federate. However, federation is a very broad question, and one that requires a great deal of attention, and no doubt it will be thoroughly discussed when the report comes before the House for Therefore I have no intention consideration. at present to refer at any length to that subject. Then, the trade with South Africa is a matter which honourable members should give close attention to. It appears to me that there is a growing trade with those colonies, and a trade which ought to be conserved, and this colony ought to secure a fair share of it, even supposing it may involve a present expenditure of a few thousand pounds while the trade is in its infancy. The general opinion is that there is, and must be for some years

to come, at any rate, a very large consumption of the natural products of this colony ; and, realising that fact, it behoves those who are interested to think out and suggest means for New Zealand participating in the trade with the South African colonies. There can be no doubt that, if we are a good business community, before long we shall have a large trade with South Africa, and I think the export of cereal products is a matter worthy of very great attention. Then, there is the question of State coal-mines. I believe the leader of the Opposition referred to that matter briefly in my absence. It is a subject which has often come before us on previous occasions, but it has now come before the House in a more tangible form, and surely it was a question which might occupy our attention for a quarter of an hour, at any rate. Sir, I regard the Government as the trustees of the people over a large estate, containing immense mineral deposits of great value, and, that being so, I contend it is quite time some steps were taken to start State coal-mines, so that the Government may provide its own fuel for our railways, and that the people may be supplied with coal at what I would call a reasonable figure. I also expected to hear the reference to the fire-brigades criticized. For myself, I am pleased to see, Sir, that this important matter is now assuming something like a proper form. I have long held that fire-brigades should be treated somewhat as semi-soldiers. They are certainly worthy of more attention and of more assistance than they have been receiving in the past. They fight that terrible enemy fire, and we often hear of them doing deeds of heroism

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equal to the deeds of heroism performed on any battlefield. I also expected the land-for-settlements question would be discussed. If we go back for a few years and read in Hansard what some of the members sitting opposite then said about that matter, it is surprising they have nothing to say about it now. Of course, I do not blame them ; but at the same time I certainly expected to hear some criticism from them through their old leader. Within the last two months I have myself visited two of the largest estates. Cheviot and Starborough Estates, and any one who sees them cannot but admit they are an object-lesson for the whole colony. I do not intend to go into figures with regard to the position of those estates, because the Minister of Lands will no doubt do so later on. At the same time I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without emphasising the reference to the matter in the 'Speech. Sir, I quite agree with that paragraph, and the fact that honourable members have not taken the matter up and given their opinion upon it is surely an admission by them that the position of things there is most satisfactory. I can say the settlers are doing well, and are keeping more sheep upon the land than the first owner used to keep there, while at the same time they have increased the number of cattle, and cultivated thousands of acres for agriculture. Of course, connected with these estates there is the question of the necessity of bringing them into constant communication with the main trunk line of the colony, and on that point and the North Island Railway I certainly expected to hear something from the leader of the Opposition ; but, as a matter of fact, there was no real criticism at all. Last year members strongly impressed upon the Government the necessity of completing our main trunk lines ; and any one who goes about the colony cannot but realise that the sooner these lines are completed the better it will be for the colony as a whole. Then, Sir, we have made a wide departure from our usual programme through annexing the Cook Islands, and we have now a young foreign policy to attend to. It is a matter that has been criticized outside the colony, and I certainly expect to hear something about this important question from honourable members opposite. The well-doing of those whom we are now attempting to govern is a matter of some importance. Probably we may hear something later on regarding them, and an expression of their opinion from those who are able to judge and have some experience of the matter may, at any rate, prove valuable to the House and to the public outside. Then, Sir, we have had the census enumeration. We know that the colony is gradually improving, and, although the population is not growing by leaps and bounds, at any rate a very steady and satisfactory rate of progress is going on. I am

one of those who have always thought that an increase in the number of the population would be a very great advantage to a colony like New Zealand, and I have never hesitated to express that opinion, because, realising that as we stand at the present time we are not more in population, or not equal to what we could call a third-rate city in the Old Country, there is plenty of room for an extension, and for five times the number we have at the present time of the right class of men. This is also a matter of very great importance to the colony. Now I have a few words to say with regard to the Advances to Settlers Office, and it may interest a good many honourable members and the country to know that what was stigmatized by the Opposition formerly as a measure leading us to the high road to ruin has proved to be quite the reverse, and that whereas it was stated that those who borrowed from this Advances to Settlers Office would never pay their rent or interest, yet that these predictions have been refuted and effectually dispelled in the working-out of the office itself. It is very pleasing to notice that the results as they stand at the end of the last financial year show that the applications received by this office up to the 31st March, 1901, were 12,999, and that they covered an amount equal to £4,540,828. The number of applications on which, up to the 31st March, 1901, advances were authorised was 9,931. Mr. T. MACKENZIE .- What are you quoting from ? Mr. MILLS .- I am quoting from a return of the office, which is authentic. Mr. MASSEY .- For this year or last ? Mr. MILLS .- Up to the 31st March, 1901; and the amount advanced is £3,244,900. Mr. HERRIES .- Has that return been laid on the table of the House ? Mr. MILLS .- Then, the number of advances authorised and declined by applicants up to the 31st March, 1901, was 1,230, and the amount was £565,380. I have just mentioned this to honourable members because it was always understood, from the inception of this great measure, that the cardinal point should be safety to the State ; and therefore, while there may be some regret, and some people may be annoyed that the advances are not made in such large sums as they make application for, the department had to be guided by the valuers, who go and value the land and bring in their report accordingly. The advances authorised to and accepted by the applicants numbered 8,701, and the amount was £2,678,520. Now, there was also a measure passed which gave a rebate of interest to tenants of the Crown, and the total amount of rebate of interest for the last year was no less a sum than \$8,000. I think, therefore, it is quite clear to honourable members that the system is working well, and that it has been most beneficial to those who were bound to go into the money-market to get financial assistance. The only grievance I have heard in regard to it is that the amounts allocated are not as much as some honourable members would have wished. But that is almost a natural sequence in connection with the borrowing of money, when it comes to examining the securities the borrowers have to offer. Then, I had expected to hear something with regard to the prosperity and the progress of the colony in this debate.

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As to the prosperity of the colony, if you take the Customs duties as the financial pulse of the colony, which are a very fair indication of the condition of a country, it will be found that there has been a steady increase year by year. It has not been spasmodic at all ; but, with the exception of one year during the past ten, we have had a growing increase in the revenue, and it has been steady. I will just quote from the figures showing the Customs duties for the last ten years :- 3 1,625,173 1892 .. . 1,642,595 1893 . . 1,655,503 1894 .. . 1,569,787 1895 1,649,344 1896 .. 1,818,893 1897 1,935,262 1898 . . 1,965,017 1899 . . 1900 2,107,567 2,180,862 1901 .. The gross amount of revenue collected through the Customs for the past year represented the large sum of £2,366,480. The slight decrease in the revenue in 1895 was accounted for by the change in the tariff. I think, therefore, that honourable gentlemen will realise that the progress and prosperity referred to in the Speech is borne out with solid facts. I am pleased to learn that the leader of the Opposition recognises these facts, and, as he is the only one on that side who has spoken, or, I understand, intends to speak, on the Address, I must assume that all the rest are equally satisfied. Then, another departure has been made in regard to borrowing money in aid of public works.

Up to last year, as honourable members know, our loans had been floated in the Home market, but the Government, in their wisdom, considered it advisable that the money should be borrowed in our own colony. And what is the result ? It has been most satisfactory. An Hon. MEMBER .- What interest do they pay ? Mr. MILLS .- Four per cent. An Hon. MEMBER .- What did they pay in the other colonies ? Mr. SEDDON .- Another colony paid 4 per cent. in London. Mr. MILLS .- Yes, and some of them more, besides all the expenses attached to it. Now that these loans are floated in this country the only expense in connection with them is advertising, and that surely points to a considerable advantage. Then, again, the interest on such a loan will permeate through all classes of the colony, spreading its direct benefits, and it is the first start of what I consider the redemption of our loans from the Old Country. At any rate, it was very pleasing to notice that when the colony was asked to subscribe our half-million loan they did so, and in no very niggardly spirit either. They offered a sum of £861.300 at a trifle over par. Well, that is another great consideration. Since I have been in this House I have seen a number of loans floated on the Home market, and the results have been very different in comparison with this loan. And not only that, but those who have tendered in a great many cases are people of small means, who have shown their confidence in the country by such investments. At any rate, there is one thing very clear on looking round all through the colony, and considering the position of affairs a few years ago, when there was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth over many things-we have now grown into what I call a very happy family. I have come to the conclusion that the country has shown, through the last elections, that they prefer making us a very happy family, and, having done so, I shall hope that we shall continue to justify their wishes. I hope that, even if we agree to differ on some questions before long in the session, we shall hear these different opinions expressed in a fair and reasonable way ; and if we are to have no Opposition or no leader of the Opposition, well, then, I can only say that we shall probably develop into a kind of guerilla warfare that will not be a credit to the House or the country, and I say that on due reflection. It is a great deal better to have a recognised leader, and work in accord with him, and show some organization. Honourable members may laugh, but at the same time I am entitled to give expression to my opinion, and I do so. That has been my experience, judging from what I have seen of those who constitute the two parties; and what we call the third party, or Left Wing, in this House has always been a miserable failure. My opinion is that it is far better to have a recognised leader, and go on constitutional lines. Now, Sir, in conclusion, I think we may be justly proud, for not only have we converted the Opposition, but we are converting the Press every day of our lives. Why, this evening I took up an erstwhile very rabid political opponent, and was very pleased to read how fully they agreed with the policy lines of the Address, and to read how nicely the colony is getting on ; and I believe that very soon the Christchurch Press will be following in the same footsteps. An Hon. MEMBER .- It has done so now. Mr. MILLS .- I am very pleased to hear that. At any rate, judging by the past in comparison with the present, when I see the happy faces sitting opposite to me now I take it that they have recognised the error of their ways, for, after all, I believe it has been the endeavour of the Press and the Government to do what they considered the best for the largest number-the greatest good to the greatest number-and that should be the guiding star for any political party. I am not going to delay the House any longer. I have expressed what views I wished to place on record, only I am very sorry I have been unable to criticize the speech of the honourable gentleman who preceded me, owing to its brevity and there being nothing to criticize. I am more confirmed than ever that we have a great future before the colony, and it only requires each of us to put our shoulder to the wheel and do what we can to help, and the result must be satisfactory.

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Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccarton) .- Sir, one does not like to say anything harsh in regard to a Minister who makes his first appearance in that capacity in this House, but I cannot help saying that the speech just

delivered is an indication of the wisdom of the Premier in selecting his colleagues from time to time from those gentlemen who have served as Whips, for this evening we have had a speech given us as nearly like a stonewalling speech as ever I have heard. The figures the honourable gentleman gave us were those he gave to his constituents a few weeks ago in a speech he delivered at Blenheim, and I have looked for the return to which he referred as being laid on the table of the House in regard to the advances to settlers- An Hon. MEMBER .- Laid on the floor. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - My honourable friend said it was laid on the floor. I do not know what he means, and I have not yet heard that the floor of the House is a place for the reception of parliamentary papers. Captain Russell, in the course of the speech he delivered, referred to the question of Liberals and Conservatives, and said that the differences had disappeared. I think they have to a very large extent. The other day a newspaper published in South Canterbury, of which a member of the Legislative Council is proprietor and editor-I refer to the Hon. Jeremiah Matthew Twomey, who, I believe, is in sufficiently close touch with the Ministry to be able to say what is the actual position-stated in a leading article that the Premier had won over the Conservatives to his side. That is the position that has taken place : that the Premier has now won over the gentlemen who have been leaders of the Conservatives,-in the country if not in the House, -to his side ; and it has not been difficult during the late Royal tour use#cc-zero to see evidence of this. The gentlemen in Christchurch who were selected for the high and honourable position of Royal Commissioners to arrange for the reception of the Duke and Duchess of York, were they drawn from the Liberal party? There was Mr. G. G. Stead, managing director of the Christchurch Press ; Mr. Wigram, the largest proprietor of the Lyttelton Times, who has always been identified with the Conservative party; and Mr. Robert Allen, a gentleman who has always been understood to be Conservative in his leanings. Mr. SEDDON .- Oh, no. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- I think I may be considered to know something about Christchurch. Then I come to a State function given by the Government to the returned troopers and veterans: and not one of the members of Parliament for Canterbury was honoured by an invitation to that function ; the only member of Parliament present was the honourable member for Napier, who was a visitor to Christchurch, whilst the local guests who were there were, I believe, every one of them, leading members of the Conservative party. I am stating what is a fact. If those gentlemen were asked because they were connected with the executive of the War Fund, then I reply-I will give the honourable gentleman what I suppose to be his explanation, because I do not wish to be unfair-if that is the case, then I say there were members of Parliament who did whatever they were able to do in assisting the fund in their constituencies, and, as the function was not one for which the Premier was going to pay out of his own pocket, but was one for which the country was going to pay, I certainly think that the representatives of the people in the Province of Canterbury had as much right to be asked to meet the returned troopers and veterans as had the gentlemen who formed the executive of the War Fund. Having said that, I do not wish to refer to the matter further. I wish to congratulate the colony and the Government on the continued prosperity, which is unquestioned ; and also regarding the establishment of the penny post I heartily indorse the congratulations which have been tendered. I also congratulate the Government upon the success attending the functions in connection with the reception of the Duke and Duchess of York. Those functions were well and worthily carried out, and I believe that the colony will receive nothing but good from the expenditure in that respect. Of the policy which is outlined, however, in the Speech from the Throne there is comparatively little to be said. It is practically colourless, and emphasizes in a marked degree more than ever the exhaustion of the initiative of the Ministry that now occupies the Treasury benches. The Pacific-cable proposal is a matter of history of some year or two past. State coal-mines, now taken up, have always been opposed by the honourable gentlemen who are on those benches. Last session, in this House, a quotation was given from a speech by the Minister of Mines on the West Coast, in which he declared against State coal-mines. The Premier also, during last recess, set up a Royal

Commission to inquire into the coal question ; but before that Commission had the opportunity of sending in a report or coming to a conclusion the honourable gentleman anticipated their report, in case it might be said that they had given the Government a policy by recommending the establishment of State mines. Then, with regard to railway pensions, that is no new thing, for it has been advocated on the floor of the House for years. Local government has been a standing dish in this House for a number of years past, and at last we have the Government bringing down a modified proposal of the betterment principle, which the Premier and the Minister for Public Works, a little over twelve months ago, at the turning of the first sod of the Cheviot Railway, opposed. The question was raised at that function by the member for Christchurch City (Mr. Ell) and myself, and was strongly opposed by the two Ministers present. There were other members present on that occasion, and they will bear me out in the accuracy of what I am saying. Yet to-day, under pressure-when they see that the country insists upon something of that kind being done - the Ministry come forward and claim credit for initiating the policy ; whereas, as regards both the betterment prin-

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ciple and State coal-mines, their action is to all intents on a par with that in regard to old-age pensions : when public opinion has been educated upon these advanced questions, and when it becomes dangerous to the Premier to ignore them, he says, "If you want old-age pensions, or if you want the betterment principle, or State coal-mines, nobody else shall have a chance of giving them to you-I will give them to you myself." That is not the position of a statesman ; that is the position of the opportunist and the politician of the American order, who says, "Them's my sentiments, and if they don't suit they ken be altered." I wish to refer for a few moments to some of the questions which are dealt with in this very lengthy, if not important, Speech. And, first of all, to the lands for settlement. The Speech says that "the earth-hunger continues"-and so it does. In the Province of Canterbury during last year I would like the (Government to state what lands have been opened for settlement. Sir, I watch the papers pretty carefully, and I remember a few months ago a speech which was delivered by the Right Hon. the Premier on the occasion of a visit he paid to the Township of Waipawa. On arriving at Waipawa a number of the leading settlers waited on the right honourable gentleman and urged that lands in that district should be opened for settlement. The honourable gentleman said that he considered the Government were to blame for no land in that locality having been opened up. He gave the honourable member for Waipawa, Mr. Hall, every credit for having urged the Government to open lands there, and said that he, as head of the Government, took the responsibility for saying that the Government were to blame. And what happened? The honourable gentleman came down to Wellington and took the whole of the Land for Settlements Department out of the hands of the Minister of Lands, and from that date the Minister has ceased to have any control over the Land for Settlements Department. I venture to say that that was a degradation to that Minister. I say advisedly, though I do not wish to speak harshly of the Hon. Mr. Duncan, whom every member respects personally, that if he is not fitted to administer the lands for settlement of this country he ought not to be Minister of Lands in this House. Mr. SEDDON. - It will perhaps surprise you if I tell you that I have had control of the Lands for Settlement in respect to purchasing lands ever since the late Minister, Sir John McKenzie, retired. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - Does the Hon. the Premier tell me that the Lands for Settlement has never been in the hands of the Hon. Mr. Duncan ? Mr. SEDDON. - No. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - What does "No" mean ? Mr. SEDDON. - That from the time Sir John McKenzie left the Ministry I have had the administration of the Land for Settlements Department as regards the purchase of estates. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - Not as regards the cutting-up of the land ? Mr. SEDDON. - No. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - Then, I say the position becomes still more conflicting. We have now this fact : that while the Hon. Mr. Duncan and his department are to be trusted with the cutting-up of the land for settlement, yet they are not fit to undertake the matter of purchasing

the land. I venture to say that any- thing stronger for the purpose of emphasizing the po-ition I am taking up in connection with this matter could hardly be conceived. I say that down to the 31st December last, during the first three quarters of last financial year, the Government had not purchased twenty thousand pounds' worth of land for settlement in this colony. An Hon. MEMBER .- They could not get the money. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- I do not know what the cause was; I merely mention the fact. And yet the Government say " the earth- hunger continues." Of course it does. But if the Government would put a block of land like Waikakahi on the market in Canterbury every month it would all be taken up with avidity. There are very large areas of land, not indivi- dually equal in size to the area of Waikakahi, but in a number of sections even that area of terri- tory could be put on the market. What is the fact ? Canterbury all the time is losing the cream of its population, which is being drawn to the North Island. I, as a Canterbury man, say that during these past ten years it has been stated to us that we ought to vote large sums of money for the development of the North Island because Canterbury was receiving its equivalent in the way of land purchased for settlement. Now, Sir, let me refer to one or two cases where there have been purchases for settlement-and I presume that the Premier is responsible for these purchases. Two miles out- side of Christchurch there was purchased, not many months ago, thirty acres of land, at the value of \$90 per acre. The land belonged to a gentleman named Freeman, who has now gone Home. I think he has made a for- tune-and no wonder, if he could sell his land at that price. Now, four acres of that land have been cut off the block for the purpose of roads. Three hundred and sixty pounds' worth of land was taken for roads. The land has been cut up into thirty-seven sections, and a number of them are quarter-acres. I believe the applica- tions were opened the other day, and I under- stand that there were eleven applications for the whole block. And this is called land for settle- This is what the Government call ment ! satisfying the earth-hunger. And yet, let me tell you, they can get equally good land on every line of railway going out of Christchurch at \$30 or £40 an acre, while the whole of the traffic from the land bought at £90 an acre will go over the Christchurch tramways. Another case : I saw the other day that a block in the district which I have the honour to represent, owned by Sir Westby Perceval, was purchased. That was a block of 100 acres. I do not know whether

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and that man got a rebate of 10 per cent. off his rent. I wonder if that is the kind of legis- informed that some fifteen acres of that block is lation the Premier understood he was sup- one of the worst patches of Californian thistle porting when he forced that measure through there is in the whole of Canterbury. What the settlers who have earth-hunger are going to the House last year. do on a block of land which grows Californian thistle in that way I really do not understand. the member for Auckland City (Mr. Fowlds) I certainly think that, as member for the dis- says - namely, that the Premier was told that trict, I might have been asked about it, as I would be the effect ; but we all know he was know the district pretty well ; but that courtesy determined at all hazards to force the thing has not been accorded to me, and all I can hope through. Now, I should like to say something is that the land is not going to be cut up into about the railway rolling-stock which is re- quarter-acre sections. I imagine the cutting-up ferred to in the course of the Speech from the of blocks into these very small areas represents Throne. In the Speech we find this state- an intention on the part of the Government to try to lower the average cost of the land-for- ment :- settlement selections. Now, in so far as that kind am glad to say, still continues to increase, and of thing is called settlement it is simply ridicu- an increased expenditure of necessity follows. lous and absurd. The object of the Land for Settlements Act was to give landless men-that is, men who had not enough land to make a living out of it-a chance of making homes for them- selves and their families ; and it is perfectly absurd in one part of the colony to cut up land into sections that are of an average value of #3,300, as was done in the case of Elderslie, and then in another case to cut up blocks into quarter-acres-land bought at £90 an acre -and call that land for settlement. What is wanted is that there shall be some clearly

defined policy underlying the operations of the Land for Settlements Department, with a view of encouraging settlement along- side of our railway - lines, so that we may promote railway traffic at the same time that we are encouraging settlement, and so that we may give the small yeomanry a chance to become small farmers on their own account, and gradually grow into a larger class of farmers, with the view of becoming more wealthy as they grow older. There was an Act passed last session, which has been referred to this evening, called the Rebate to Crown Tenants Act, and in connection with that Bill a promise was given by the Premier in the House that every case that came up would be considered on its merits. Honourable members will bear me out in that, and it was on that condition the Bill was allowed to pass. What happened when the 10-per- cent. rebate first came before the Govern- ment? I understand that throughout the colony the Receivers of Land Revenue applied to the Government for instructions as to how the Act should be interpreted, and the Government absolutely refused to give them any indication as to the correct reading of the law. The Premier, I suppose, not being in charge of that part of the Lands Department, had forgotten to communicate to the Hon. Mr. Duncan the promise he had given. On the other hand, in the Province of Canterbury the Receiver of Land Revenue has taken 10 per cent. off the rent of every man who paid within the prescribed time; and I will tell the Premier what has been the effect of it. I heard of a case of a block of land in the Cheviot of some 1,600 acres which a man held under lease in perpetuity at 3s. 6d. per acre. He wanted to sell his interest in the land, and the price he put on it and Mr. FOWLDS .- He was told about it. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- I agree with what "The traffic and revenue on our railways, I With the arrival of the extra locomotives and rolling-stock now on hand and ordered, the requirements of the railways will be fairly met, and at no distant date, both as regards locomotives and rolling-stock, my Ministers hope to have the same constructed within the colony." Sir, I was pleased to hear that the folly of this colony importing large quantities of rail- way rolling-stock is not to be continued. I suppose, if we consider the 120 American cars that have been or are being imported, the 1,000 railway-wagons that are being imported, and I do not know the exact number of locomotives, but I think it is about twenty, that are being im- ported, we shall arrive at a total expenditure for imported railway rolling-stock of nearly \$400,000. Now, if we come to consider that at least one- third of that amount represents wages for labour in the manufacture of these locomotives, cars, and wagons, we shall see what a tremendous loss is being sustained by the working-classes of this colony through the importation of this rolling- stock. I will deal, in the first place, with the importation of the American cars, of which there are 123 that have either arrived or are in course of erection. I do not think, Mr. Speaker, that any one who has inspected those cars will consider them in the slightest degree an im- provement on the cars that have been turned out from Addington, Hillside, Newmarket, or An Hon. MEMBER .- They are not so good. Petone. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- That, I believe, is the general opinion that is expressed-that they are not so good. Now, let me say that, in the first place, these American cars weigh 3 tons more than the largest-sized birdcage cars that are built at Addington. That means 3 tons more of drawage for the engine. They occupy 6 ft. more of platform-accommodation. They hold fourteen less people. With regard to the cost, the information I have received, although I am not in a position to verify it, is that each of those American cars costs about \$300 more than the best class of cars built at Addington, which, as I have already said, hold fourteen more passengers and weigh 3 tons less. The information that has reached me is that the cost of the American cars landed in

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New Zealand is £1,700 each. The Addington cars cost, I believe, £1,400 each. I am not in a position to say that these figures are correct-I give them for what they are worth ; but I have no doubt their accuracy can be tested by the Minister and by the department. Now, with regard to the American engines, it is a truism throughout the Australian Colonies and New Zealand that, although the American railway- engines work easily and freely when they are first placed on the line, yet they do not stand the running as the

colonial-made engines do. Any man who works in one of the railway shops will tell you that after a year or two the American engines are constantly coming in for repairs, whereas it is a most unusual thing for the locally made engines to require repairs at all. although they may work more stiffly at first. Therefore that much is against the engines being imported. And now with regard to the 1,000 railway-wagons that are being imported by the Government. Honourable members will, of course, be aware that tenders were invited for the construction of 500 or 1,000 railway-wagons within the colony, and I believe I am correct in saying that at least one tender was sent in by a South Island firm for the manufacture of these railway-wagons for about #126 each. The tender was not accepted, although that firm offered to construct the whole of the wagons that were asked for within thirty-four months; and I believe their proposal was to construct twenty by the end of nine months, and after another three months to turn out twenty-eight every month, thus completing the whole 500 wagons in thirty-four months. Now, I do not know under what terms the English contractors are making these railway-wagons, neither do I know whether they are being made as the result of tenders or not, but I have been informed, and the Minister will be able to correct me if I am wrong, that these English wagons, by the time they arrive in this colony and are fitted up, will cost us over \$150 each. That is the information which has reached me; and I got this, as I say, from the man in the street, for it was from no one connected with the Railway service. I give the honourable gentleman my absolute assurance to that effect. I say the cost was, at any rate, £120 to \$130 for construction, in addition to which there is the cost of transit and erecting out here, bringing the cost of these wagons up to £150. I am quite aware the Government have let a contract in Invercargill for the manufacture of 200 of these wagons at \$106 each. but I think anybody who knows anything about their manufacture will know that the contractor will not make a very fat thing out of it. I do not blame the present Minister-I blame the department : and I say that at the time the necessity for further rolling-stock was evident to the department orders should have been given for the machinery that was necessary to extend our workshops in this colony, so that we should have had the plant and material for the manufacture of these railway-wagons and the railway-cars within New Zealand And before I close this subject I should like to add that I do not know why there should be this strong feeling on the part of the present Government in favour of the Americans. I do not know that the Americans have ever done anything that should cause us to feel particularly sweet regarding them. They have excluded our wool-and, in fact, all our products- and yet we find the Government have entered into the service with the Oceanic Mail Company which was referred to by the honourable member for Wellington Suburbs this evening, under which the vessels of this colony are being driven to work a line from Brisbane to Vancouver, while we are compelled to allow our 10.0. mails and cargo to go in American bottoms. And this is not the only instance, for, in connection with these railway-cars, why were tenders not asked in London or Canada for the manufacture of these cars? Why were tenders not asked amongst men of our own race - men who are under the same flag? What reason was there that we should go to an American company and give them £126,000 of New Zealand gold for the manufacture of cars that are to run upon our own lines ? There may be an answer to this question, and, if so, I hope the honourable gentleman will give it. Now, I should like to say a few words about the half-million loan, for which congratulation was tendered to the Government by the Hon. the Minister who sat down a few moments ago. I congratulate the Government upon a return to the self-reliant policy ; but I cannot congratulate them upon fixing the price of their loan at 4 per cent. I certainly think that by floating the loan at so high as 4 per cent. the Government acted unwisely ; and it must be admitted at once that the interest they are giving to the money-lender in connection with that loan is far higher than they are allowing the working - classes for the moneys that are being placed in the Post-Office Savings-Bank. Why should there be this discrimination in the rate of interest that is being paid in connection with the Post-Office Savings-Bank, when the Government utilise the moneys paid into that institution for exactly the same purpose as they utilise the

money lent by the financiers at 4 per cent. ? And I see the Government themselves point out in the Governor's Speech a recent rise in the rate of interest. What can be expected but that the rates of interest will rise when the Government put a half-million loan on the market at 4 per cent ? Surely the Government could not have been aware that at the very time they floated this loan at 4 per cent., when they got only a few shillings over par for the money, the New Zealand 4-per-cent. loans were worth £113 and \$114 on the London money-market. And although the loan was for a short term-I admit it was only a three years loan at 4 per cent. -yet there can be no doubt whatever that, with so much money as was lying at the banks at the time uninvested, had the Government placed that loan at 34 per cent. it would have been taken up by banking and financial institutions, and the Government would not have been the means of themselves helping to raise the rate of interest. There is another

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thing, Sir, which I think this House would do well to seriously consider. I refer to the Public Revenues Act which was passed at the close of last session, a measure which most materially affects the rights and liberties of members of this House. Sir, under that Act this Legislature has handed over powers to the Premier and to the Government which have never been asked for and have never been given within any constitutionally governed country in the world. Talk about the "Divine right of kings." What is the position now? Notwithstanding the fact that the salary of His Excellency the Governor, and of the Ministers, and of the Judges, and of the Auditor-General, and of members of Parliament, and of you, Sir, as Speaker, and of the Chairman of Committees are fixed by law, the power of raising those salaries-though, I admit, not of reducing them -rests solely in the hands of one man, and that man, Sir, is the Premier. And I say it is not fair that you, Sir, occupying the high and distinguished position which you do, should have to feel at the end of this session that you receive through the gift of the Premier, who, as representing the Crown, has the sole right of initiative in this matter, any increase of the salary that comes to you by the law of this land. Neither do I think the members of this House desire such a thing as that their hono- raria should be increased by any other means than a statute embodying that increase. The Government have virtually recognised that position in the Address, where they say they propose to bring in a Bill this year to deal with the honorarium. Then, I say, if the raising of the honorarium of the members of this House last year was the prime object in introducing the Public Revenues Bill, let the Government be willing, at the beginning of this session, to sweep away that clause which enables a vote of the House to override the statute law, and thus bring back this House to its responsible position as guardian of the public purse. There is one matter in connection with this which I feel bound to refer to, and that is the very large number of honourable members who this year have been upon Royal Commissions. I do not know, Sir, what the exact number of members so employed is, but I feel bound to point out what, in my opinion, is an important constitu- tional matter in connection with the position of these honourable members. By the Disqualifi- cation Act no member of Parliament can receive more than \$1 per day for serving on a Royal Commission. Now, Sir, let me point out that the clause in the Public Revenues Bill referred to overrides that clause in the Disqualification Act, and that if the clause in the Public Revenues Act to which I have directed attention is to continue, there is nothing whatever to prevent any Go- vernment purchasing political support in this House by handing over Royal Commissioner- ships to a number of members of this House, and then paying them such an amount as they choose afterwards, and so introduce a system of spoils that I think we in this colony would be exceedingly sorry to see. I simply point this matter out as one of the possibilities of the situation. Now, Sir, I would like, in concluding the few remarks that I have to place before the House, to say that, in my opinion, some of the things that will require to be watched by this House are the departures which the Govern- ment from time to time are making from constitutionalism and from democratic prin- ciples. The first of these to which I would refer is the very large number of Royal Commissions which I have mentioned just They are all set out in the Speech now.

from the Throne-the Royal Commission on coal-mines, the Royal Commission on rivers, the Royal Commission on federation, the Royal Commission on the Midland Railway, and, finally, the Royal Commission on school - teachers' salaries. In addition to these there was one other Royal Commission : I refer to the appointment of a gentleman of the name of Holmes, who, I believe, is a resident of Wellington, and who was appointed a Royal Commissioner in connection with the Royal visit. I saw by reference in one of the papers that this gentleman actually received the same salary as a Cabinet Minister-namely, \$100 per month-during the time he was occupied in that position. Mr. TANNER .- Hear, hear. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - Well, my honourable friend the member for Avon says " Hear, hear." I sincerely hope that his " Hear, hear," does not indicate a departure from the principles of democracy in thinking that that was a proper payment. Mr. TANNER .- It was ironical. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- I am very pleased to hear the honourable member say so. Well, let me point out that the number of the members of the Ministry was increased last year in order that Ministers might be able, by dividing the portfolios over the new members, to undertake and do more thoroughly the work of the country. And yet this year stands absolutely unprecedented, I believe, in regard to the number of Royal Commissions that have been set up ; and what for ? Why, the whole of these gentlemen who have been touring the colony have been going about to provide Ministers with a policy. Have they a policy regarding school-teachers' salaries ? They had a Bill last year, and we know what became of it. You, Sir, pointed out, I think, when the title was being put, that the only thing that remained of the Government Bill was a part of the title; and those gentlemen since then appointed a body of Commissioners -a number of them members of the House-scouring the colony from end to end for the purpose of obtaining a policy regarding teachers' salaries. The Coal Commission has found them a policy regarding a State coal-mine ; the Midland Railway Commission, apparently, has settled a difficulty that the Government did not possess financial ability sufficient to undertake and settle for themselves. The Federation Commission have gone on an extensive tour throughout the Australian Colonies, and have reported exactly what everybody knew they would report - against federation ; because there was not a single member of the Commission-at least, I am not aware of one-

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who had not expressed himself against federation before he started on the tour. Surely this kind of thing is a departure from constitutional principles? I say this House expects the Ministry of the day to be a body of men capable of formulating a policy on any question, and of leading the House and the country in bringing it down. But I should like to say there is, in the second place, a tendency on the part of the Government to override constitutional authority ; and what stronger illustration could I give of that than to point out that last session, on the supplementary estimates, the House passed a grant of \$500 for the colony to be represented at the inaugural festivities of the Commonwealth- \$500-and yet, Sir, no sooner had we got to our homes at the close of the session than we discovered that while that very vote was before the House the Premier had cabled to Australia offering to send a body of mounted troops. I say, is this dealing fairly with the representatives of the people ? Is it right that we should be asked to vote such a small sum as \$500, while the Premier is cabling and setting wheels in motion which would probably have required thousands to be spent ? That is a case of constitutional authority being overridden. I do not wish to refer to the small sum voted in connection with the visit of the Duke of York ; that was merely a sum of £6,000. In connection with this I say I am prepared to admit that the Government rose to the occasion, as I said in the earlier portion of my speech, and on the whole the money was well spent. But one thing in connection with this I wish to refer to. I am speaking now of the gradual departure of my honourable friends on the Treasury benches from that simplicity of life which should characterize democratic politicians in a young and democratic colony. A few weeks ago, in Hokitika, the Premier, in a speech which was the subject of some humour on the part of some of the

comic papers of the colony, said he enjoyed in the old days a dance on the West Coast in nugget boots, Crimean shirt, and corduroy pants better than he ever enjoyed a dance in a Court suit. An Hon. MEMBER .- It is probably true. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- Most probably it is ; but there is no reason whatever why the right honourable gentleman should not have been dancing in his nugget boots, Crimean shirt, and corduroy pants all the time. Who was the statesman-the politician-in this colony who first set the example of putting on a Court dress? It was not the Hon. Mr. Ballance, nor any of the previous leaders of the Liberal party ; it was not Sir Harry Atkinson, or any of the gentlemen who sat on that side of the House when in opposition - the Conservatives-but it was my right honourable friend the Premier. And though I must say he looks remarkably well in it, I cannot forget the fact that he it was who first started this move of gradually leading the democratic leaders of this colony into the position of aping the dress and the gear that attach themselves to the old Courts of Europe, where our fathers came from, and we ourselves are pleased to have separated and shut ourselves out from. But that is not the only thing in regard to which I have to criticize the Premier. The honourable gentleman has lately taken to having mounted body-guards-I do not know exactly in what capacity. In Sydney the Maori troopers who went to the Commonwealth celebrations were a body-guard to the Premier. An Hon. MEMBER .- NO. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - Then, the newspapers misrepresented the fact. The newspapers stated that the honourable gentleman sat in the carriage with the Native Minister, and the mounted Maori troops were a body-guard. If the newspapers have stated the matter inaccurately I cannot help it ; but I believe that the newspapers have stated it correctly ; and, in so far as that account of the matter is concerned, it is a departure from what I believe should be the democratic simplicity of Ministers in this country. But not only in Sydney does the honourable gentleman go in for mounted body-guards. At Nelson the Waimea Mounted Rifles escorted the honourable gentleman from the residence where he was staying a few months ago to the camp ; and only a week or two ago the Right Hon. the Premier went to open a bridge at Otaki, and as he got out of the train at Otaki a body-guard of the Otaki Mounted Rifles escorted him through that village-I presume, Sir, in case there should be some remnant of the old Hauhau rebellious spirit there, and to protect the sacred life of the honourable gentleman from any possible danger. But that is not all. The Right Hon. the Premier has started to institute a kind of knighthood of our own. We have, Sir, of course, the Imperial knighthood- and here I express my personal congratulations to the honourable member for Awarua, Sir Joseph Ward, upon the honour which has been conferred on him for his Imperial service in connection with penny postage, and in other directions in which he has assisted the colony ; but what shall we say of the Right Hon. the Premier, who, when he was over in Melbourne a few months ago-I read the account in the Melbourne Argus, an account of the conferring by the Premier upon the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria - I forget his name ; I think it was Mason. Mr. WILFORD .- Brown ! Mr. G. W. RUSSELL .- On account of the friendship of that gentleman, and the courtesy which was shown to the Premier, the latter actually cabled to New Zealand that a special meeting of the Executive Council should be called, and that this Mr. Mason should be made a J.P. And then the Argus went on to report that this honour was personally conferred by the Premier upon the recipient in the legislative offices, or in the hall of the Victorian Parliament, over which he presided, and in the presence of the officials. I could not help wishing that I had been there-in the language of the hymn, " Oh, what must it be to be there." I do not know whether the Premier ordered this gentleman to kneel in the orthodox fashion and receive the honour while he struck him over the back with his stick, or whether this gentleman had the good sense to take his honour standing;

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but I do think that anything more in the nature of a burlesque than the fact of the Premier of this colony conferring the honour of J.P. - ship in the halls of the Legislature of Victoria upon the Speaker of that body has never been witnessed. Nothing more ridiculous has ever been heard of. I believe that was not the

only case. I saw by the papers a few weeks ago that some one in Adelaide had had a similar honour conferred upon him, only, unfortunately, this gentleman will miss the advantage of a personal presentation of the honour. There is one more matter to which I wish to refer, and I am sure the Premier will not think I am saying this in any unkind spirit; but I wish to show one further departure on the part of the Premier from what I may call the principles of simple democracy. Last year honourable members will remember that some reference was made to the crest which the honourable gentleman had begun to use on the note-paper on which he sent out his social invitations. A printed copy of that crest was shown to some honour-able members of this House. I saw it, and it was no secret. It represented, in the first place, a pair of lion's gamb's holding something-ex-actly what I cannot say, but it might have been a very large oyster, or it might have been a loaf of bread, but most probably it was a nugget of West Coast gold. Underneath were the quarter-ings in ancient form according to the office of the Registrar of Heralds, and there was a Latin motto, which, so far as I remember, read some-thing like this-" Non bono Se idono." I am perfectly sure that if that was not the correct motto it is something like it. Now I come to my point. This crest appeared in the City of Christchurch on a carriage in which the Right Hon. the Premier rode at the func-tions connected with the Royal visit. That use#cc-zero crest was the only one on any of the carriages accommodating the Royal party, with the ex-ception of the Royal Arms on the Duke's carriage; and, Sir, both the crest and the Latin motto had been altered. The lion's gamb's no longer hold the oyster. Instead of that there rises a beautiful flower from the lion's gamb's, which, I believe, represents the blossom of the kumara. I have looked up Featon's work on New Zealand flora, and that is the flower. The Latin motto was no longer " Non bono Seddono," but " Vulneratus sed non rictus." That, Sir, is the Latin motto, which has been obtained, I presume, from the heraldry of England within the last three months. But now comes the question, Who paid for the painting of the crest on the carriage ? Mr. SPEAKER. - I must say that the honour-able gentleman's speech is tending to degenerate and lower the tone of parliamentary discussion and the dignity of the House. The remarks are unconnected with anything in the Gover-nor's Speech or the Address in Reply, and it appears to me that he is now wearying the House by his lengthy remarks about crests and mottoes. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL. - I do not wish to weary the House, neither do I think I am departing from the fair criticism which mem-bers of this House are entitled to express in connection with the administration of the colony. The information I have is that the person who owned the carriage in which the Premier rode also drove, or arranged for the driving, of one of the Royal suite, the Duke of Teck. I am informed on what I believe to be good authority that the Government paid the persons who prepared these carriages for the Premier and the Duke of Teck \$50 for up-holstering and painting them-including the crest to which I have referred. The informa-tion I have is that the contractors did not accept their order for painting and up holstering those vehicles from the person who owned them, but from the Government. And I say, therefore, putting aside all question of humour and any question of ridicule, that if that is the manner in which some of the expenditure has been made in con-nection with the visit of the Duke of York, it shows that the Premier has been utilising the position he holds as head of the Government and in charge of the finances of the colony for the purpose of ministering to his own vanity, by painting crests and by riding in carriages with those crests on ; which I say, whatever may be the opinion of any man in this House, is unworthy of a man who has attained the position he holds in this House and in this colony by the presumption and belief that he is a demo-cratic man who has risen from the humble ranks of the workers, and who by his own ability and hard work has won the confidence of the people of the colony, but who now, when he has risen to the place he holds, utilises that for the purpose of making displays that are only ridicu-lous when they are apings of Royal honours, and of the honours that are attached to His Excellency the Governor as the representative of Royalty in this colony. Mr. NAPIER (Auckland City) .- The in-cident we have seen to-night of the abdication by a great constitutional party of its proper functions in the Legislature is one of the most

regrettable in the political annals of the colony : for a properly organized Opposition has its legitimate place in our Constitution. It has an important duty to perform in the criticism of the policy measures and the administration of the party in power, and when we see such an abdication, such an abandonment of duty, as that we have witnessed to night, such a confession of failure on the part of the distinguished gentleman who has hitherto held the position of leader of the Opposition, we must necessarily deplore it, and especially so for this further reason : that it necessarily imposes on the followers of the party in power the duty to perform the functions of an Opposition, and to endeavour to criticize the mistakes of the Government they support, for mistakes, of course, must necessarily be made by any party. "To err is human," and there is no- thing I could wish for more, if I were not a supporter of the Liberal party, than to occupy the position of an Opposition member, and to have the opportunity of criticizing, and thus perfecting, the measures and the administration

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of the Government in power. Sir, I regret to worn and perfectly hackneyed criticism. It see the absence of criticism on the part of the Opposition. If they were worth their salt they would stump the country from end to end with the materials at their disposal, and I am sure they would, if they had the energy, be able to arouse such a flame that we would soon see a much more numerous Opposition on those benches-a state of things which would be better both for the Government and the country. But the policy of the Opposition is manifest to us. It is simply this : that by refraining from performing their legitimate duties they may entrap the Liberal party into an exposition of the diversity of views in the various groups which might result in expressions of opinion adverse to the Ministry, and thereby cause the present large and consolidated phalanx of Liberals to be broken into fragments. The honourable member for Hawke's Bay twitted the Government party with following the dicta of one man, and he said the policy before the House was not the policy of any party, but the policy of Mr. Seddon. Sir, it is a very singular thing that one so learned in political history as the honourable member should not recollect that the policy of a party is always personified in the leader of that party. Take the name of Cobden. What does it signify? It signifies a policy - the policy of a party. Will any one say the followers of Mr. Cobden were intellectual slaves, or that they were not worthy of a place in the Legislature of Great Britain because they followed that sagacious man ? Mr. Cobden's name is identified with the repeal of the corn-laws, not because he himself accomplished the actual work, but because he was the leader of the party. At first it was a small party, but it grew in numbers until its power was such that it swept away the laws that had up to that time filled the pockets of the landed aristocracy of Great Britain at the expense of the masses of the people. Take the name of Shaftesbury. Is not that name associated with the abolition of the slave trade? It does not imply that the large party that was at the back of Lord Shaftesbury in the country were men who were ashamed of their leader, or of whom their leader would be ashamed because of their alleged subservience. Take the names of Disraeli, of Gladstone, of Parnell-all the great names in our political history are associated with great movements, and so it will be with the name of Seddon in New Zealand. I say unhesitatingly that, notwithstanding that I have differed from the Premier on some occasions, and have criticized his actions-and I may do so to-night where I think it to be necessary-the right honourable gentleman's name is associated, and will be for all time, with the rising tide of Liberalism in New Zealand-a tide which is never destined to recede. I say the name of Seddon will be linked inseparably to the various measures of political and economic reform that have been adopted and passed into law by the predominant party in New Zealand during the last seven years. Therefore, Sir, there is nothing in the criticism that the policy of the party is the policy of Mr. Seddon. It is a time- was applied at the time of the secession of a number of Liberals in England from their party to those Liberals who adopted the Home Rule principle, and they were called " Gladstonians," as though they had forfeited the name of Liberals, and their right of independent judgment. Now, Sir, referring to the Speech of His Excellency the

Governor, I observe that the characteristic note of the Speech is one of unchecked progress. It shows a determination on the part of the Government to continue to lead the political party which supports them upon the path of progress. I note the sneer of the honourable member at the apparent lack of unity among the members of this party. Their apparent lack of unity, their independence of thought, and their independent criticism show that the Liberal party is a live party, and at the same time that we are not the mental slaves that the honourable gentleman opposite twits us with being. The marked characteristic of the Conservative party in England, as well as of the Conservative party in this colony, has been its cohesion, because of the abject subjugation of the members to the will of its leader for the time being. But the reason that the Liberal party in the Old Country has on occasions lost its unity of purpose - and it is a matter of history that such has been the case - was that Liberals are necessarily groups of men and thinkers who have advanced to different stages of thought and judgment on political questions, men who are perfectly independent in their judgment and perfectly unfettered in the expression of their thoughts. And that, Sir, is also the reason for any apparent lack of cohesion in the ranks of the Liberal party in this colony. This independent criticism is not an indication that the policy of Mr. Seddon is not the policy which has been evolved by the Liberal party as a whole. It may be that the Government measures do not go so far as some members of the Liberal party might wish. It may be that they go further than another section of the Liberal party may desire. But the leaders of the party for the time being are bound to take the average view, not to take the extreme view - not to go to the position taken up, perhaps, by the honourable member for Riccarton, and on the other hand, to go much further than the position of some Liberals, who might more appropriately sit on the other side of this House. Now, Sir, with regard to the Speech, I notice that the most important measure, to my mind, to which reference is made is the local government Bill, or, as it is termed, the Counties Bill. Well, I do not agree with the remarks which fell from the honourable member for Christchurch City, I think it was, or perhaps it was the honourable member who seconded the motion. He referred to the fact that by consolidating the various local bodies a large amount of money would be saved. Now, I believe in consolidation in particular cases. Perhaps the instance alluded to, where there are six or seven Borough Councils within a small radius, may be an extreme case ; but at.

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the same time it would not be an unmixed blessing to abolish the local bodies of the country and to consolidate them, even for the sake of a saving in expense, if the effect were to concentrate the administration in the hands of a large unwieldy body. I say, Sir, that the traditional policy of Liberalism is to subdivide the functions of government, and to delegate governing powers as much as possible, and to bring them as closely as possible to the people - to bring local government practically to the doors of the people. I say it would be a retrograde step to concentrate in large County Councils all the administration, and sweep away all the minor local bodies. Over a large area in the North I am quite satisfied public opinion would not tolerate such a thing, because our means of communication are so bad. There are no roads and no railways; and there, practically, one portion of a large county is almost inaccessible to another portion. You would find men in such a case administering the affairs of a district which they had never visited. I will just give you an illustration of what I mean. I live adjacent to and have property in a district called Takapuna, which is administered by the Waitemata County Council. Only some three or four years ago I took the members of the County Council out to Lake Takapuna, as some of them had never seen the district ; and yet they were governing us who lived there, or, rather, misgoverning us, for many years previously. And because we had not enough people to form a borough we were annexed to a district which had no community of interest with us, and were represented by people in some cases living sixty or seventy miles away. Now, this is a progressive district, practically a suburb of Auckland ; and to annex a district of that kind to a county, most of the Council members of which have no local knowledge

of the particular district, would be a mistake. In England it was the policy of the Liberal party to create parish Councils, in addition to the County Councils, and, unless a Parish Councils Bill goes hand-in-hand with the County Councils Bill, I say the step we are asked to take will be a retrograde one, and will not be in the interests of popular government. Besides, I do not agree that a saving of expenditure is everything in this matter. I believe that the political education given to the people in the small bodies is of value, and a large number of persons becomes accustomed to the administration of public affairs ; and where you have a large number of people accustomed to administering public affairs, accustomed to the methods of carrying on public business, I think you have a system that has an educational value to the democracy entirely outside the question of cost, and I hope this view of the matter will not be lost sight of. I note with great pleasure that the Government intends to pursue with vigour the construction of the North Island Main Trunk Railway. If that be so, it will be necessary during the present session to devote half a million of money at the very least to that great national work. This sum-\$500,000 -will be our irreducible minimum this year, because, supposing the line is to be constructed in two years and eleven months, say, from tonight-that is the time for which a solemn league and covenant has been entered into- namely, four years from June, 1900-we shall require half a million of money during the present session. Then, I hope the Hon. the Minister for Public Works will let the construction of the viaducts beyond the Makohine Viaduct by contract, as experience has shown that the construction of complicated works by co-operative labour has not been as great a success as was anticipated. I believe in the co-operative system where it is possible to carry it on with efficiency and reasonable speed, but it is quite certain that we shall have to wait a good many years for the completion of this work if we have to depend upon those viaducts being constructed by co-operative labour. The Government does not possess the necessary plant, and to order the manufacture of plant merely to do this work would, I think, be an industrial mistake. I am very pleased that the annexation of the South Sea Islands mentioned has been made an accomplished fact by the Order in Council of His Majesty the King. But I am not quite certain that the Bismarckian methods of Lieut .- Colonel Gudgeon, the Resident at Rarotonga, are the most desirable to employ for the purpose of increasing the trade and prosperity of those islands. I defended him last session when an attack was made on him which I considered unjust, but I am bound to say that the eccentricities he has displayed at Rarotonga since the last session have been unique in their character. For instance, he has passed a law 1 which takes all the fruit from the growers compulsorily, so I understand. He assumes the power of sale and disposal of the fruit of the natives-takes it entirely out of their hands- and he sends it to New Zealand to some particularly favoured firm, and then he supplies the returns to the natives. Now, he justifies this, I believe, on the ground that he obtained better results from a trial shipment of fruit sent to Wellington than were formerly obtained in Auckland. When I say that the fruit was a special consignment, and was sent at the end of the season, when high prices were ruling everywhere, it will be seen that the shipment referred to is no criterion that the step he has taken in destroying freedom of trade is a wise one. I say we have no right, even though we have imposed our government on these natives, to deprive them of commercial liberty. They have a right to send their fruit where they choose, and, now that these islands are a portion of our territory we cannot tolerate that the methods of the Czar of Russia should exist among these natives when they are now our fellow-citizens. I believe that Colonel Gudgeon will become wiser, and will quietly drop these practices, and that we shall have a return to methods more in harmony with ordinary political economy. The reception of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York was, I think, a reception of which colonists generally have every reason to be proud. The illustrious visitors themselves, I believe, went away from our shores with more pleasurable feelings than they felt after leaving

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any of the other colonies they visited during their tour ; and, as an Aucklander, I feel very proud of the

success that attended the functions in the northern city. I believe, Sir, by universal consent, the palm has been given to Auckland, both for the beauty of its decorations and the enthusiasm of its people. The citizens of Auckland were quite capable of performing the duties of hospitality on the occasion. We did our duty, I think, in all respects. There was a gentleman sent to Auckland, however, by the central authority, I suppose, to teach us what was befitting the occasion. When he first came to see us after his arrival in Auckland everything was going on nicely, and I wondered why he was intervening, and why the central authority should interpose in a free and self-governing city. And when I saw him I said, "You had better lie low, because if you do not strife may result, and the success of the reception be jeopardized." Well, Sir, I think the gentleman was discreet after that, and he did not obtrude himself so much ; notwithstanding which, I saw to my surprise in some illustrated papers which have been published during and since the reception a photograph of Mr. John Holmes, and in the letterpress the statement that the success of the function was primarily due to his efforts. I do not desire to in any way disparage Mr. Holmes, but it is simple truth to say that he had nothing whatever to do with the success of the Auckland reception. The decorations at Auckland were considered by the Press not only of Australasia, but of England, to be unique, and prettier than those in any other part of Australasia. Now, Sir, advert to another subject : In regard to the settlement of the land, to which reference has been made, I should like to notice an observation made by the honourable member for Riccarton. He asked why did the Government not open up more land in the vicinity of Canterbury for settlement by purchasing estates under the Land for Settlements Act. I submit that it would be folly for the Government to purchase land at £90 an acre while there are hundreds of thousands of acres of fertile land in the Auckland District, and in portions of the Taranaki Provincial District, unsettled, the greater portion of which is in the hands of the Government, and a large portion of which can be acquired without any difficulty from the Natives under the Maori Lands Administration Act of last session. I suggested last session that the proper way of peopling this Native land was for the Government to take it over, after making ample provision for papakainga reserves, and credit the Natives with the capital value in the books of the Public Trustee, and let the interest on that sum, at the usual rate of 4 per cent., be paid to the owners of the land and their descendants. Then, the Government should settle the land at once under the lease-in-perpetuity system. There are hundreds of young men-the bone and sinew of the country-in the Auckland District waiting to go upon this land. I urged the Government most strongly last session to lose no time in opening up for settlement the land in the Ohura Valley, to which there is an excellent road ; and I trust greater expedition will be shown in this matter during the present year. Just one word regarding the purchase of rolling-stock. It has lately been mentioned to me that, notwithstanding that we are urgently requiring more carriages and more wagons, a number of men have been retrenched, joiners from the Government workshops. An. Hon. MEMBER. - Where? Mr. NAPIER. - At Newmarket. But I hope, if this is so, the men will be reinstated, and that other men will also be taken on if there is sufficient plant to employ them, so that the requirements of the settlers and the travelling public in the matter of rolling-stock may be adequately met. The new American carriages, so far as they apply to Auckland, do not suit the climate until alterations are made ; they are not so suitable as the birdcage-carriage for our semi-tropical climate ; they are too close, the windows being hermetically sealed. If they were altered and made more after the pattern of the birdcage-carriage, our people in Auckland would very much prefer it. The honourable member for Riccarton indulged in somewhat of a sneer at the American people, which I regret. He referred to them as foreigners. I say, Sir, they are our own kith and kin, and they ought not to be referred to as foreigners. Mr. WILFORD. - They treat us as foreigners. Mr. NAPIER. - I shall deal with the criticisms of the honourable member for Wellington Suburbs later on. The Americans are not foreigners ; and I say the time is not far distant - I hope it is imminent-when a union, not only of a commercial but also of a political nature, will come about between the United States and the British Empire. In regard to the ques-

tion of defence, in which I take & special interest, the Government is to be congratulated upon having taken some steps to carry out the Defence Committee's report of last session; but I regret that Ministers have not done as much as they might have done. I am not disposed to captiously criticize them, owing to the fact that there have been extraordinary events happening which have, no doubt, engaged their attention ; but I regret that the Volunteers of the colony have not received that amount of consideration which this Parliament ordered that they should receive. Now, it is a law of this country, because the Defence Committee's report has been adopted by both Houses of Parliament ; therefore, that report is as much a law as if it were a statute of Parliament. I maintain that a resolution of Parliament is a law. This resolution is an order to the Executive Government to do certain things. The report of the Defence Committee, which is published in the Appendix to the Journals of the House, H .- 1, shows that a number of things were ordered to be done for the perfection of our defences which have not been done. For instance, the capitation of £3 10s. per annum which should have been paid to the Submarine Miners and Garrison Artillery Volunteers has not been paid ; and

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when inquiry was made I was informed that the permanent head of the Defence Office said that he did not know anything about the report of the Defence Committee. Is it not extraordinary that, owing to some rule of the Circumlocution Office, this anomalous state of things should exist, that an order of Parliament should be officially unknown to the Under-Secretary for Defence? Well, that is an absurdity, and I say that the Under-Secretary for Defence should have taken this resolution of Parliament as an order, without any Ministerial minute. It is a direction from Parliament. Then, it was ordered that the Volunteer Force of the colony should be properly equipped, such equipment to include overcoat and waterproof sheet. Now, those articles have not been supplied, and they were wanted very recently at the Christchurch review. Their absence has caused a great deal of inconvenience and even illness amongst the Volunteers, owing to the fact that many young men from the North, not anticipating the severity of the Canterbury climate, went down without private overcoats. The old method of expecting the soldier to do anything in any climate in any weather without adequate equipment is now entirely exploded, and the saner military principle of taking care of your men is the one that all modern military commanders act upon. It pays to look after your men, to preserve their health, and thus prevent unnecessary waste of life and health. I trust that before very long this particular direction of the Defence Committee will be carried out. With regard to rifle-ranges, there is a direction here in this report that proper rifle-ranges should be secured, but as far as Auckland is concerned nothing has been done to provide a rifle-range, and the whole Volunteer movement in Auckland is languishing, and the men are unable to qualify as expert marksmen, because the old range has been closed for volley-firing, and only men who are highly qualified are allowed to shoot at the short ranges which are available at the Mount Eden rifle-range. The long-distance range has not been secured, although there are three or four available. Mr. SEDDON .- They demanded a large increase as soon as they found the Government wanted the land. Mr. NAPIER .- For the number of acres required for a rifle-range that would not have been very much. Then, again, here is 11.30. another point : It is well known that some two or three years ago a plan to encourage the drilling of Volunteers by daylight was introduced, because one daylight parade was worth many night parades, especially in that branch of the service with which I am connected-the Garrison Artillery. A payment of 2s. 6d. per man was authorised for daylight parades. It was found impossible to get two-thirds of a company present for a daylight parade, because the statutory half-holiday is kept by different businesses on different days. Some kept Wednesday, and some Saturday, so that you could not get two-thirds of the men on either Wednesday or Saturday afternoon. Consequently, the Committee decided that if half a company was on parade they should get paid, and the clause in the report is to this effect. Now, that direction of the Defence Committee has not been complied with. The consequence is

that daylight parades have ceased to be called. I note, Sir, also, that reference has been made in the Speech to the success of the Advances to Settlers Act. I agree that the success of that measure has been complete, and I hope that the principle will be extended still further, as in South Australia has been done, so as to include advances to shippers of New Zealand produce. In South Australia, notwithstanding that the experiment was there denounced, no losses have resulted to the Government in undertaking these advances to shippers. Of course, great care is exercised, and advances are only made upon approved products that have passed the tests of the Government expert. I trust that the Government will take into serious consideration the desirability of extending to country settlers this boon of obtaining advances on their produce, as at present the commissions, interest, exchange, and various charges are so excessive as to unduly handicap producers. There is no reference in the Speech to any new method, system, or principle as applied to railway management, but I hope the Minister for Railways will devote a little more consideration than he has hitherto done to the question of the desirability of adopting the Vaile stage system. I believe that that system is one calculated to develop the country to a great degree, especially those portions of the country which are remotest from the large towns. Though the departmental managers have made proposals, and induced the Minister to adopt various small portions of the Vaile system, I think the time has arrived when the system should be tried in its integrity over some section of the colonial railways. I should regret exceedingly if this country should allow Mr. Vaile-the inventor of the system, whose name is world-wide, and who has received the thanks of railway scientists all over the world-to pass away from among us before an experiment were made of this system over some complete section of our railways. The people of Auckland are unanimously in favour of having the system applied to the Waikato line, and I hope that some proposals of a practical nature will be suggested by the Minister to enable this to be done. There is another important matter to which reference has been made, and that is the necessity of having Government vessels to carry our produce to the markets of the world. I entirely concur. But, Sir, there is another feature of the matter to which I would like to advert, and that is the necessity of having large passenger-steamers to ply between New Zealand and Australia. Now, Sir, I am aware, from communications made to me, and from my investigations in Australia some six or eight months ago, that thousands of persons are deterred from coming to New Zealand, and seeing our natural wonders and the beauties of our scenery, because they have to travel in the inferior steamers, some of which might be called old tubs, that the Union Steam-

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ship Company provide, especially for passengers between Auckland and Sydney. I say those words advisedly. I was travelling with a number of people between Sydney and Auckland at the end of last January, and the steamer was so loaded-she was so overloaded - - An Hon. MEMBER .- What steamer was it ? Mr. NAPIER .- The " Mararoa " ; and she is supposed to be one of their best boats. That passage was a cause of so much suffering to passengers that many English travellers on board said that they would never visit New Zealand again. One gentleman, whose wife was almost dying, said to me, "I expected, and do still expect, to spend three very pleasurable months in your country "; but he said many months of pleasure could never efface from his memory the three days of suffering-he used a stronger word-that he had experienced on board that steamer. If we can divert the tourist traffic to this colony, and obtain the benefits of the presence of a large number of wealthy people in our Wonderland, I say it is our imperative duty to establish better means of transit over the waters of the Tasman Sea. There is nothing more socialistic - if that be a word of reproach -in having steamers owned by the Government to carry people from a continent to their own islands than there is in the Government owning the railways to carry the people over the land. And if we had a couple of vessels like the " Grosser Kurfürst," vessels of 8,000 or 10,000 tons, we would have such an accession of people of means to our population that the prosperity of this country would be very greatly enhanced. The question of State fire insurance is one to

which I hope the attention of the Government will be speedily directed. We have lately had a discriminating tariff imposed on us in the North by the insurance combination, and I say that the people ought not to be subjected to the domination of a trust, or a corner, or a ring, or whatever you like to call it. Indeed, it is possible that such combinations are illegal at the present time. There is a reference in the Governor's Speech to the fact of legislation being required to control trusts or combinations; but I believe, if the Government took a test case into Court, under the existing law they might probably succeed. The common law is against these trusts, but private individuals have never fought them in the Courts, because the combinations are generally very wealthy, and they could take a case from Court to Court until the costs would be so great as to deter their opponents. I am glad that the question of federation with Australia has been settled-I hope, and I believe, for a generation. I do not think that this colony would in our time derive any advantages whatever from federating with Australia, and I believe if we were subjected-especially in legal matters-to the control of a final Court of Appeal sitting in Australia it would not be to the interests of the New Zealand people. Whatever we do ultimately, even if we do eventually federate, I think the right of appeal to the Privy Council should be maintained intact for every subject of His Majesty. I have also to join with other honourable members who have spoken in congratulating the Postmaster-General on the inauguration of the penny postage. The success of the new system has been beyond anything that could have been anticipated, and if it be that within two years the original revenue will be obtained at the reduced rate, considering the enormous commercial and social benefits which have been conferred upon the community by the establishment of that system, I think the honourable gentleman deserves all the praise and the encomiums that have been given to him for his spirited and statesmanlike action in this matter. Sir, I desire to make a few observations in reply to certain remarks that have fallen from the honourable member for Wellington Suburbs with regard to the San Francisco mail-service. It was evident, of course, to every member of the House that the honourable member was holding a brief for the Union Steamship Company. He dilated in grandiloquent terms upon the benefits that that company has conferred upon the colony. Personally, I have never heard of those benefits, but I have heard of the enormous benefits that the colony has conferred upon the Union Company. I understand that most of their boats have been built out of the earnings of the New Zealand people, and, if that is so, I think we are entitled to greater consideration from that company than we have ever received at its hands. The honourable member said he told some gentleman, who was opposing his views, that he should go to Japan, where if he opened his mouth-erroneously, I think, he said-his head would be cut off. Well, I do not know how many heads the honourable gentleman himself would require if he went to Japan and if such a state of things existed there, because I never heard a speech containing so many erroneous statements as the speech of the honourable gentleman to-night. The honourable member referred to some mythical "thirty-years war of the Caucasus." I never heard that there was a thirty-years war in the Caucasus. With regard to the criticisms that have been levelled against the San Francisco service by the honourable gentleman, I have only to say I would be pleased if it were possible to have the service performed by a British, and still more by a New Zealand company; but there is nothing to prevent that being done. The Government is not showing any favour to the Oceanic Company. There is a fair field. If the Union Company has the enterprise and the public spirit and the means, let them build steamers of adequate dimensions and of sufficient speed to carry on the mail-service within the contract time-and I should personally be in favour of giving them better terms than those given to the Oceanic Company. The Union Company has not shown any disposition, however, to carry on the work. They simply wish one of their steamers to join in the service-a thing they know is impossible under the American law; and, if that is not done, then they wish to wreck the best and fastest mail-service in the colony. Notwith-

standing what has been said about the " So- noma " being one day late, or two days late, or four days late on recent trips, I ask honourable members if, notwithstanding these delays, there is any other route by which we can get our letters from England more quickly than by the San Francisco route. I say there is not. If you take the speeches of Mr. John Duthie, who is one of the strongest antagonists of the San Francisco service, it will be seen that he admitted the San Francisco route was the quickest-an opinion with which the opponents of the system cannot but agree. They say, " We admit it is the fastest ; but since the establishment of the cable, and since so much business is done by cable, a fast mail-service is not so necessary as it formerly was." I say it is as important as ever it was. Considering the expense of cabling, it is impossible to do any great volume of business by cable, and any business-man will bear me out when I say that nine-tenths of the business of the colony is done by correspondence, and not by cable. The delays referred to are not of any significance at all. The steamers were new. They were built in great haste, at a time when there were industrial troubles in the United States. They were built at express speed, so to speak, and consequently defects occurred in their construction which were not observed in the process of building ; but after those defects are remedied I believe you will find the boats will perform the service with unerring regularity. At present they arrive so well up to time that we look for their signal on Mount Victoria, in Auckland, as we look for the arrival of a train. We look for them with as great confidence as we look for the arrival of any boat that comes into the harbour from any of the ports along the coast. For twenty - odd years the "Alameda" and " Mariposa " have performed the service with unflinching regularity, and there is no reason to suppose that the faster boats, when they have settled down properly to their work, and slight defects have been remedied, as they are now being remedied in San Francisco-there is no reason to suppose that these new boats will not be as notable as their predecessors were for punctuality, and their speed will, of course, be much greater. Now, Sir, there is just one other matter to which I will refer, which, though I mention it last, is by no means least. I allude to the adjustment of the finances of the North and South Islands. I trust, when the estimates come down we shall see that an effort is made to allot to the North Island a small portion of the debt which is due to it by the South Island. There is a debt of three millions and a half that we are entitled to be paid in any equitable adjustment, in addition to the ordinary appropriations, and I hope that some portion of that money may be allotted to us in order to make an approach towards financial equality between the two Islands. We are not asking for the whole of that old debt to be paid at once, but it is only just that some small instalment of it should be paid. We have had it on the authority of the Premier that the assets originally appropriated for the construction of the North Island Trunk Railway have gone into the Colonial Exchequer. An Hon. MEMBER .- No, no. Mr. NAPIER .- They have practically gone. The fiat has gone forth, and that is the situation. It cannot be done, of course, legally, as the interest, by law, has to be applied to the construction of the railway ; but when the construction is finished the interest will naturally lapse into the Consolidated Fund. I do hope that, considering the large amount of land which has yet to be roaded in the North Island, and the exceedingly profitable business to the country the opening-up of that land is, the Government will make an effort to devote a larger proportion of the expenditure on roads to the North Island than has been the case in past years. I am aware that last year was an exceptional year for us, and I have no reason to complain of the appropriations then made : they were as much as we could expect from the Government. I hope the same policy will be steadily pursued, considering the large amount of leeway we in the North have to make up. Sir, I have now concluded the criticism which I intended to make in the dual capacity of a Government supporter and an Opposition member, which we are all constrained on this side of the House to take up to-night, seeing that the regularly constituted Opposition is extinct. I trust the Government will continue its work, which has now been carried on for a period of ten years, in the interests of the people of this colony. I concur with some of the remarks-though I do not --- approve of the asperity with which they were uttered-of the honourable

member for Riccar- ton, that we ought to adhere to simple forms of life in this colony. We do not want in this colony to introduce the feudal system of Great Britain, or any of its concomitants, and I hope we shall follow the advice of the late Sir George Grey, that we should be content with humble homes and moderate wealth. If we go on in that way, I believe the colony has no reason to \- look with any misgiving to the future. I believe we shall pursue our course of progress and prosperity uninterruptedly probably for many generations yet to come. Debate adjourned. The House adjourned at ten minutes to twelve o'clock p.m. ##