

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. Tuesday, 2nd July, 1901. Governor's Speech - New Members - Resignation of the Hon. Mr. Oliver - Imprest Supply Bill (No. 1). The Council met at half-past two o'clock. Shortly afterwards His Excellency the Governor entered the Chamber and took the chair. A message was forwarded to the House of Representatives desiring the attendance of members in the Council Chamber. The members of the House of Representatives, with their SPEAKER, accordingly attended.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH. His Excellency was pleased to deliver the following Speech :- HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,- It is to me a great pleasure to meet you again in Parliament assembled. Since the last session of Parliament an event of a strikingly sad character has overtaken the nation in the death of Her late Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, who passed away on the 22nd day of January last. On her demise becoming known, one great throb of grief went forth throughout the civilised world. It was our late sovereign's constant desire to promote the best interests of her people, and to maintain their liberties and improve their conditions. Her greatness and good works will live for ever, and her reign has added imperishable glories to our Empire. In the death of our late good Queen Victoria the world has suffered an irreparable loss. She was

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beloved and revered by her subjects, and her memory will ever be enshrined in their hearts, and well may it be fervently said that " Her grave was watered by a nation's tears." Messages of sincere sympathy and condolence were forwarded by me to His Gracious Majesty the King and the Royal Family, to which the following reply was received from the Secretary of State for the Colonies: " His Majesty the King and the Royal Family command me to express their sincere gratitude, in which His Majesty's Government join, for the sympathy of New Zealand in the lamented death of Her Majesty Queen Victoria." On the death of his beloved mother the late good Queen Victoria, His Majesty assumed the Throne as King Edward VII., and the people of this colony most loyally acclaimed the reign of the new King, and his assumption of the Throne was with fitting ceremony proclaimed at the threshold of our Parliament Buildings. In almost every city, borough, and county throughout the colony similar functions took place, and the people with one voice exclaimed, " Long live the King !" The most pleasurable event since the founding of the colony was the recent visit of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, and the enthusiastic and loyal reception given them by the people of this colony will, I feel assured, ever be remembered with pleasure. The addresses presented came spontaneously from a free and devoted people, and breathed loyalty to His Majesty, his Throne, and Royal person. The enthusiastic welcome and

receptions given to their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York were, in all parts of the colony visited, heart-felt, sincere, and universal. The demonstration by the people of the Native race at Rotorua was magnificent, unique, and historical, and it is questionable if ever again there will be another such gathering of the noble Maori race. The following passages taken from His Royal Highness's farewell message, in a letter conveyed to me on the eve of their Royal Highnesses' departure, places on record the pleasure experienced and impression formed during their visit : - " Dunedin, 27th June, 1901. "DEAR LORD RANFURLY, -On the eve of our departure I am anxious to tell the people of New Zealand how happy we have been in their beautiful land, with what regrets we leave it, and what lasting feelings of gratitude we carry away for the loyal enthusiasm, cordiality, and kind-heartedness so universally accorded to us throughout our stay. " I was especially glad to meet face to face the Maori people, to have witnessed their vast and interesting gathering at Rotorua, and to have had personal friendly intercourse with their leading chiefs and representatives. It was gratifying to hear their assurances of loyalty to the King, their expressions of sorrow for their deeply loved Queen, and to experience their enthusiasm and warmth of heart towards ourselves. I am glad to think that this ancient and chivalrous race is living in peace and prosperity, and sharing with their Pakeha brothers the duties and responsibilities of good citizenship. " "Though, unfortunately, our stay has, from force of circumstances, been a short one, I earnestly trust that the experience and knowledge of the country which I have gained, and my personal intercourse with its people, may in some measure tend to sustain and enhance the existing feeling of sympathy and interest between the Mother-country and New Zealand, and thus draw still closer those ties of affection and brotherhood by which we are so happily united. "Heartily wishing that the steady growth and prosperity of the country may ever continue, believe me, dear Lord Ranfurly, very sincerely yours, " GEORGE." With the dawn of the new century the birth of the Commonwealth of Australia was celebrated : New Zealand was officially represented by the Right Honourable the Premier and the Honourable the Native Minister. The Commonwealth Parliament was opened by His Royal Highness the Duke of Cornwall and York on the 9th May, and was a most imposing ceremony : the Honourable the Colonial Secretary and the Honourable the Minister of Education officially represented this colony. It will be pleasing to all well-wishers of the colony and the inhabitants of the Cook and other Islands to know that by letters patent, dated the 13th day of May, 1901, His Majesty has approved of the extension of the boundaries of the colony so as to include the islands mentioned in the resolutions passed last session by both branches of the Legislature, and by Proclamation issued by me and read in the presence of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York on their arrival at Auckland. The boundaries have been so extended as from the 11th day of June, 1901. As you are aware, Representative Troops of the Imperial and Indian Armies were present at the inaugural Australian Commonwealth celebrations, and subsequently arrived in our colony : and it was with sincere pleasure

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noted the hearty reception extended to them by the people of New Zealand. The hospitality shown them was very much appreciated by the officers and men. The officers in command, on leaving, expressed their appreciation of the hospitality and kindness shown. I am pleased to inform you that the United States warship " Brooklyn," under the command of Rear-Admiral Remey, visited New Zealand, and, after a short stay at Auckland, is taken to insure the health of the inhabitants came on to Wellington. The Rear-Admiral, his officers, and men were accorded a very hearty welcome, and will, I feel sure, carry away with them a kindly remembrance of their visit to this colony. I regret to say that the war in South Africa still continues. The successes, however, that have attended the vigorous efforts made by Lord Kitchener afford every reason to anticipate that ere long the war will come to a close. The First, Second, and Third Contingents have returned to the colony. The Fourth and Fifth are on their way home, and on

the 29th ultimo their safe arrival at Albany was re-ported. The Sixth and Seventh Contingents were sent to relieve the contingents returned and return- ing. and the colony has now in South Africa about one thousand officers and men, and they are fully maintaining the high reputation for bravery, energy, and gallant bearing earned by the New Zealand troops that preceded them. It is a pleasure to me to announce that the commencement of the construction of the Pacific cable is now an accomplished fact. The contract has been signed, a Board of Advice has been formed, and the work of laying the cable is progressing ; and this Imperial work, advantageous alike to the colonies and the Mother- country, will, it is expected, be completed well within the next two years. I regret to say that some friction has arisen owing to the Government of New South Wales -one of the contracting parties-having granted concessions to the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company which are deemed inimical to the Pacific-cable scheme. The others of the contracting parties were approached with the same object in view, but steadily refused to be any parties to doing anything which would militate against the success of the Pacific cable. This course will, I feel sure, be appreciated. It is the first time that the Imperial authorities and Canada have, with the Australian Colonies and New Zealand, jointly undertaken a work of ! young country like this, so favourably circum- Imperial and Colonial importance, and nothing should be done which alters the situation until after consultation, and with the concurrence of all the contracting parties. I regret to state that the bubonic plague still continues in some of the other colonies. It is pleasing, however, to know that New is free therefrom. The Health Act of last session is working well, and every precaution of our colony, and to prevent the dreaded plague reaching our shores. In connection with health matters I am pleased to note that the Native race, under the powers given by the Maori Councils Act of last session, are using every precaution, and are improving the sanitary condition of their kaingas. One of the Native race, who is duly qualified, has been appointed a Health Officer, and I have every reason to believe that the health of our brethren-the Native race-will be improved, and that the death-rate will be reduced. During the recess Royal Commissions have been appointed to inquire into and report on matters affecting the coal-mines of the colony, the disposal of mining débris into certain rivers, the Midland Railway, federation with the Commonwealth of Australia, and the feasibility or otherwise of a colonial scale of salaries for the teachers of New Zealand. On the 1st of January last the penny-postage scheme came into force in this colony, and has given universal satisfaction. I am happy to say it is a pronounced success, and it is more than probable that within two years, as the result of the increased business, the revenue will equal that preceding the reduction. My Ministers regret that up to the present several of the Aus- tralian Colonies have not seen their way to adopt the system, and are surcharging our letters. I sincerely hope the time is not far distant when the penny postage will be adopted by the Aus- tralian Commonwealth, and be universal within the British Empire. Many foreign nations that have not adopted the penny postage system within their own countries have most willingly consented to admit our letters at the penny rate. On the 31st March last the people of this colony were enumerated. The returns disclose a substantial increase as compared with the census of 1896, and a considerable increase as compared with the census of 1891. The increase ! on the whole is not unsatisfactory, yet in a

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stanced, there is room for improvement, especially in respect to the natural increase, and the falling-off in the birth-rate gives ground for reflection and anxiety. The most pleasing feature in the late enumerating of the people is that there is a marked increase in the number of those of the Maori race, and the outlook in this respect is cheering in the extreme, and exceptional in regard to aboriginals when surrounded by and brought into close contact with other races, their customs, and environments. The system of advances of cheap moneys to settlers continues popular and is working very satisfactorily, and during the last few months, when there was a tendency to increase the rates of interest, the cheap-money scheme of the colony proved a great boon not only to settlers, but to all requiring to borrow. My Ministers have

under their consideration an amendment of the Advances to Settlers Act to meet the cases of lessees on Education endowments who claim to have advances made on their improvements in excess of the amounts mentioned in their leases upon which the educational authorities have agreed to pay compensation. Fair progress has during the year been made for the purchase of lands for closer settlement. The earth-hunger continues, and to meet the demand the acquirement of lands suitable and required will be vigorously proceeded with. The law in respect to acquiring lands within boroughs for workmen's homes has proved to be defective : owners, on being notified to place their lands under offer, have immediately transferred portions to relatives so as to bring the area within the limit allowed to be retained, thus defeating the object of the Legislature. MR. SPEAKER, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, -- The estimates of the year, with a due regard to economy and the requirements of the colony, will in the ordinary course be placed before you. Until the war in South Africa is at an end a normal condition in respect to defence expenditure is impossible. Owing to the large demand caused by unusual conditions in the English money-markets it was not deemed advisable to follow the usual course of raising the money required under the Aid to Public Works Act in London. My Ministers deemed it desirable to raise the half-million loan locally, and the experiment has proved entirely satisfactory. The amount asked for was almost doubly subscribed. A pleasing feature was the large number of small amounts that were offered ; and offers of £5,000 and under were allotted in full. There was no commission or payment for underwriting, the only expense being that of advertising. An important departure, and one which my Advisers anticipate will be followed in other colonies, was that of the interest being made payable in New Zealand, Australia, or London. The traffic and revenue on our railways, I am glad to say, still continue to increase, and an increased expenditure of necessity follows. 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. Another matter demanding attention is that some provision should be made whereby railway servants-who through age or infirmities, or by meeting with accidents-may, when retired, receive some superannuation or other allowance. To retire some of the older servants under existing conditions is not, my Ministers think, a fitting reward for faithful services rendered. This lack of consideration not only applies to the railway but to other public servants, and to continue the present anomalous position is undesirable. Some Civil servants on retirement are entitled to a pension, others are entitled to a month's salary for every year's service, and others are granted an amount equal to one month's salary, but not exceeding in the whole a sum equal to one year's salary. Very many whose pay does not enable them to save, be they ever so thrifty, are, as matters now stand, cast adrift without receiving anything. The classification of the whole of the State departments, and the adoption of a superannuation scheme and fund to which all the State servants contribute, are matters worthy of grave consideration. Fair progress has been made with the construction of the main trunk lines of railway during the recess, and the vigorous prosecution of these works will be continued. There is a matter of considerable importance in connection with several of these lines of railway, namely : that lands suitable for close settlement are increased in value as the work of construction proceeds ; and my Ministers consider that if these lands are acquired by the State under the

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Land for Settlements Act, say, within five years from date, the now existing value of the lands should be the basis upon which the price to be paid by the State should be determined. HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,- The mail arrangements as between the colony, Australia, the Mother-country, and elsewhere are not at all on a satisfactory footing, and our commercial arrangements are not sufficiently promoted under existing conditions. My Advisers consider that the existing barriers should, in fairness to

the colony, be removed, so that reasonable facilities should obtain for trade and commercial reciprocity. The necessity for the extension of the commerce of the colony, and for the granting of facilities for the transmission of our products to other markets, still continues. With the object of improving matters, offers were called for from steamship-owners willing to carry our products at given freights and at regular intervals between New Zealand and South Africa. The offers received were unsatisfactory, and no further action was taken pending the meeting of Parliament, and authority being given to have complete arrangements made to meet this pressing necessity. Proposals respecting this question will be submitted to you in due course. In respect to the Cook Group and other islands now within the extended boundaries of the colony, my Ministers are of opinion that no sudden change should be made in the laws affecting the same. and that for the present the Ordinances passed by the Cook Islands Parliaments should be legalised and continue applicable until other provision is made. Colonel Gudgeon has been asked to act as representative for the colony in respect to the management and control of the Cook and other islands. 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 Legislature 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 food-stuffs or coal within the colony should be sold. My Ministers desire to bring under your notice the increased prices payable for coal for State requirements. As a way of meeting this difficulty, and to insure a supply of coal for Government purposes at reasonable rates, it is essential that a State coal-mine be established. The great and growing demand for coal, and the inadequacy of the supply from the coal-mines on the west coast of the Middle Island, also render a State coal-mine advisable. The Referendum Bill, the Mortgages of Land Bill, and Bills amending and consolidating several laws relating to labour, working-hours in factories and workshops, and regulating the working-hours of bank clerks and clerks engaged in mercantile houses, and other measures affecting social matters, will in due course be submitted. A measure having for its object an increase in the salaries of members of Parliament will be submitted for your consideration and early attention. The conflagrations that have taken place in the colony since last session, and the loss of life and property caused thereby, call for immediate consideration, and, with a view of bettering the condition of the colony in this respect, my Advisers will bring before you remedial measures with the object of placing the fire-brigades, fire appliances, and water-supply in a better condition, and also of bringing under the control of the police the means of escape from fire in the case of persons living in hotels and lodginghouses, and, in respect to the larger hotels, making it necessary to have efficient nightwatchmen employed, whose sole duty it will be to patrol the buildings and give the alarm in case of fire. The Legislature having last session consolidated and amended the municipal laws of the colony, it is necessary to complete and perfect the laws relating to local self-government. With this object the County Councils Bill will be introduced at an early period, and, I hope, passed into law. A Bill amending the Chinese Immigration Act is necessary, more particularly as affecting those of the race that come to the colony as members of ships' crews. A measure extending the power of the Inspector-General of Hospitals, and providing for the registration of hospital nurses, will be brought under your consideration. On the visit of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York it was.

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found that the laws existing did not empower local authorities to incur the necessary expenditure to meet the pleasurable occasion. A Bill will therefore be introduced indemnifying and making legal the expenditure of the local authorities for the purpose. A measure will be introduced giving extended powers in respect of land affected by the proclimation of rivers in which dredging obtains. The mining and companies laws also require amending in the direction of insuring that the directors of companies shall be

liable to be pro. ceeded against for payment of calls, and that the calls of other shareholders shall be invalid unless the calls of the directors have been paid, or steps taken for the recovery thereof ; and also that in the case of gold-mines, as in that of coal-mines, a small royalty may be charged for the purpose of assisting the Sick and Bene- volent Fund of the miners engaged in the said mines. I am pleased to inform you that the constitu- tion of the Councils and Boards under the Maori Councils Act and Maori Lands Administration Act has been proceeded with, and, with the ex- ception of one part, the colony has been sub- divided into districts. The outlook is very promising, and there is reasonable expectation of waste lands owned by those of the Native race being thrown open ere long for settlement. The roading and settlement of the people on the lands of the colony is of paramount import- ance. My Ministers are giving this matter Proposals furthering this every attention. object will be placed before you. The energy of our sturdy settlers has in no small degree contributed to the largely increased exports of last year, which formed a record, and the trade returns warrant me in believing that our pro- sperity is based on a solid foundation, which I hope will be lasting and for the good of the people. I trust that the several matters brought under your notice may receive your careful attention and earnest consideration, and pray that, with the blessing of the Almighty God, the results of your labours may be for the good of the Empire, and to the lasting benefit of the people of this fair colony. HIS EXCELL ENCY, having handed to the Hon. the Speaker a copy of his Speech, with- drew. The Hon. the SPEAKER took the chair. PRAYERS. ## NEW MEMBERS. A message was received from His Excellency the Governor, notifying that the Hon. Charles Louisson, of Canterbury, and the Hon. Sir John Mckenzie, of Otago, had been summoned to the Legislative Council of New Zealand. ## RESIGNATION OF THE HON. MR. OLIVER. A message was received from His Excellency the Governor, notifying that the seat of the Hon. Richard Oliver as a member of the Council had become vacant by reason of his resignation. IMPREST SUPPLY BILL (No. 1). This Bill was read the first, the second, and the third time. The Council adjourned at five minutes past eight o'clock p.m. ## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. Tuesday, 2nd July, 1901. First Reading - Opening of Parliament - Counties Bill-Old-age Pensions Regulation -- Governor's Salary and Allowances Bill - Deceased Hus- band's Brother Marriage Bill - New Zealand Ensign Bill-Expiring Laws Continuance Bill- Governor's Speech-Imprest Supply Bill. Mr. SPEAKER took the chair at half-past two o'clock. PRAYERS. FIRST READING. Local Authorities' Indemnity Bill. ## OPENING OF PARLIAMENT. A message was received from His Excellency the Governor desiring the attendance of mem- bers in the Legislative Council Chamber. Mr. SPEAKER, accompanied by members and preceded by the Serjeant-at-Arms, proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber, and, after a short absence, returned. COUNTIES BILL. On the question, That this House concurs with the Committee in recommending that leave be given to bring in this Bill, Mr. SEDDON (Premier) said,-I beg to an- nounce to honourable members that we intend to take the same course in respect to this measure that was followed in regard to the Municipal Corporations Bill. I hope the County Councils and local bodies interested will meet as soon as possible in Wellington and hold a conference, at which the Bill will, no doubt, be considered. But I also beg to announce that, if that is not done, the Government intend to proceed with the Bill, first of all referring it to a Select and special Committee, to be ap- pointed by this House, of those qualified and having experience in respect to local govern- ment matters.

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Mr. TANNER (Avon) .- I wish to ask if the representatives of Road Boards will be asked to attend the conference. Mr. SEDDON .- Road Boards are interested in this measure, and they will, I hope, be asked to attend the conference. Mr. MASSEY (Franklin) .- I would like to know whether the Counties Bill now being read a first time is identical with the long-promised Local Government Bill. Mr. SEDDON .- It is the Local Government Bill : but, as the previous legislation was called the Municipal Corporations and Counties Bill, we have simply kept to that name. Major STEWARD (Waitaki) .- Information does not seem

to have reached the Right Hon. the Premier to that effect, but information has reached me that the Counties' Conference will meet in Wellington on the 16th of this month. Leave given to bring in the Bill, and the same was read a first time and ordered to be read a second time to-morrow. ## OLD-AGE PENSIONS REGULATIONS. Mr. SEDDON (Colonial Treasurer) presented the regulations under the Old-age Pensions Act, and moved, That they do lie on the table, and be printed. Mr. HERRIES (Bay of Plenty) asked whether, in accordance with the provisions of the Old-age Pensions Act, these regulations would be referred to a special Committee to be set up for that purpose. Mr. SEDDON said that the honourable gentleman was fully aware of his earnest desire at all times to comply with the law. Motion agreed to. ## GOVERNOR'S SALARY AND ALLOWANCES BILL. Mr. SPEAKER announced that this Bill had received the Royal assent, and that the Proclamation of that assent would be entered on the Journals of the House. ## DECEASED HUSBAND'S BROTHER MARRIAGE BILL. Mr. SPEAKER announced that this Bill had received the Royal assent, and that the Proclamation of that assent would be entered on the Journals of the House. NEW ZEALAND ENSIGN BILL. Mr. MONK (Waitemata) asked the Hon. the Premier how it was that the New Zealand Ensign Bill was not included amongst those Bills which had received the Royal assent. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) said there had been a despatch and correspondence in respect to the matter, and this would in due course, with the permission of His Excellency, be laid on the table. He might say, generally, that exception had been taken. The Royal assent had not been refused, but the Bill as passed had not yet been agreed to, on the ground that it interfered with the Admiralty's arrangements, under which it was only the Naval Reserve that could use the flag, though any one specially requiring to use it could do so on permission being first obtained from the Admiralty. The Bill as passed being general in its application, it was feared by the Admiralty that complications might ensue. Mr. HUTCHESON (Wellington City) .- Stick to the Bill. Mr. SEDDON said they would get nothing if they did that, while if they agreed to a slight alteration they would get the Bill approved. The alteration was that it should apply to Government steamers only, in accordance with the despatch. That had been agreed to so far back as 1869. The use of the flag could be applied on land in New Zealand. With that alteration he did not think there would be any difficulty in getting the sanction of the Crown to the Bill. Mr. MONK understood that the Ensign Bill would be accepted for land purposes as we now had it. Mr. SEDDON did not think there would be any objection whatever to that. However, the correspondence on the subject would put the matter right. EXPIRING LAWS CONTINUANCE BILL. On motion of the Right Hon. Mr. SEDDON, the Expiring Laws Continuance Bill was read a first time pro forma. GOVERNOR'S SPEECH. Mr. SPEAKER informed honourable members that when the House, in obedience to summons, attended upon His Excellency the Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber, His Excellency was pleased to make a Speech to both Houses of the General Assembly, of which, for greater accuracy, he had obtained a copy, which, in accordance with the Standing Orders, he laid upon the table. IMPREST SUPPLY BILL. On the question, That this Bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole, Mr. SEDDON (Premier) said, -I desire to move, That this Bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole; and I desire also to state that, as we are now two days over the end of the month, there is a necessity for passing this measure to-day. I will give the particulars of the Bill as soon as we get into Committee. Captain RUSSELL (Hawke's Bay) .- I certainly think this is creating a precedent which the House will be extremely wrong in allowing. In previous years it has been, unfortunately, impossible to disagree to the passage of an Imprest Supply Bill, contrary to all provisions of our own Standing Orders and in contravention of the well-known parliamentary practice of insisting that the Address in reply to His Excellency's Speech shall be debated and passed before a Supply Bill is passed. Sir, the Right Hon. the Premier has told us that the period during which the Government is allowed to expend money without vote of Parliament has already passed; and therefore one cannot help feeling that, however wrong it may be that there should be any serious obstruction to an Imprest Supply Bill, it would be very unwise - I will not

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say unjustifiable, for I am not sure that it would not be justifiable- but it might be unwise to obstruct. The right honourable gentleman will probably tell us presently that it was impossible to avoid the dilemma in which we are placed : that in the exuberance of our loyalty we have had no opportunity of thinking of anything but giving a hearty welcome to the distinguished visitors who have lately been in this colony, and that consequent on that visit the meeting of Parliament has had to be postponed to such a date as would prevent Supply being passed in such time as it ought to be passed. But let us consider whether that is really the case. Knowing long ago, as we did, that the colony was to be visited by the Heir-Apparent, I think we could most properly show our loyalty by conforming to ancient constitutional practice, and that ancient constitutional practice is that we, the representatives of the people, have the right to express our views and to obtain redress of grievances before granting Supply to the Crown. When once that power has passed from us, when once the power of refusing Supply to the Crown has been given up by the representatives of the people, the great constitutional privilege of obtaining redress of grievances passes from us. Mr. SEDDON .- No. Captain RUSSELL. - Probably the Right Hon. the Premier will say No ; but he knows as well as I do that he has continually violated the constitutional practice. In 1898, as leader of the Opposition, I consented to help the Hon. the Premier out of a similar dilemma to that in which he has placed us now ; but I then said that such complaisance on my part must not be reckoned upon as a precedent for the future. But, notwithstanding that, in 1899 we were again placed in a similar position, and once more the Opposition felt, rather than inconvenience all the Civil servants of the colony, rather than throw out of joint the whole machinery of government, by refusing to pass, as I then thought improperly, an Imprest Supply Bill, we consented to the passage of that Bill ; and again I said that consent must not be taken as a precedent. Now we revert once more to a position which could have been avoided this year. Mr. SEDDON .- No. Captain RUSSELL .- The Right Hon. the Premier says " No." Let us take the example of the English Parliament. The Budget is brought down in the English House of Commons always within a fortnight, or three weeks at any rate. I had no idea that this Bill was going to be sprung upon us now, or else I should have prepared myself definitely with the facts ; but I believe I am right in saying that the English Budget is never withheld for a longer period than one month after the end of the financial year. Surely it would be quite possible, if an Empire extending from one end of the world to the other, which has fleets floating upon every sea, and colonies and dependencies in every part of the world -if its Budget can be brought down within one month of the end of the financial year, surely we, in our small Colony of New Zealand, with a population of considerably under a million people, should be able to do that which the great Empire of Great Britain is able to do within one month. And therefore, as our financial year ended on the 31st March, I say there is no reason whatsoever why the Premier should not have been able to be ready to go on with the financial exposition of the affairs of the colony, at any rate, within two months after the end of our financial year. Sir, there was no possible reason that I can understand why His Excellency should not have convened Parliament about the 1st May, or shortly after that date-at any rate, long before the 1st July. Parliament, I say, might have been convened, and His Excellency might have delivered his Speech, giving his reasons for calling Parliament together at that date. This House might then have passed the Address in Reply, and after that, according to good constitutional principles, we could have proceeded to grant Supply if Supply was demanded. Sir, under the 414th Standing Order it is perfectly clear that the course we are now pursuing is one which is extremely irregular, because such a course cannot be pursued without the suspension of that Standing Order. It is known that the invariable custom was for the Address in Reply to be passed, and for Committee of Supply to be then set up. Why, Sir, were the representatives of the people not called together ? The Right Hon. the Premier says it was impossible. I would like to know his reason for saying that. Was it that he was obliged personally to arrange every detail of the Royal visit? I maintain that no such thing has been the

case. What possible reason, then, has the Premier and Colonial Treasurer that is stronger than the upholding of the people's liberties and privileges—which are continually being violated by this system of compelling the representatives of the people to pass an Imprest Supply Bill before we have had an opportunity of discussing any grievances there may be? It is an old and constitutional practice that I desire to uphold. It has come down from time immemorial—from the days when the Crown was liable, when once it had received supplies, to flout the Commons, and give them no chance of expressing grievances or redressing wrongs, the result of such action being that the House of Commons insisted that before Supply was granted to the Crown, there should be an opportunity given to them to discuss any grievances there might be. It is not the first time we have had this old custom violated in this colony. Time after time the Financial Statement has been put off for two or three months, until in some instances we find ourselves debating the finances of the colony seven or eight months after the end of the financial year. Those of us who have all along been anxious to uphold constitutional principle, and the observance of the Standing Order I have referred to, are, unfortunately, not in a position to do more than raise our voices against the constant violation of our own Standing Orders and constitutional practice that is being pursued. In this case, however, I consider that we may really put aside all question

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of party. For myself, I do not raise it as a party matter at all. There are members on both sides of the House who believe, as I do myself, that it is our duty to uphold the privileges that have come down to us, and to resist the practice of the Premier in adopting an autocratic attitude and snapping his fingers in the face of every precedent, and doing as he thinks fit. The honourable gentleman knows it is now only a case of government by himself. All custom, all precedent, everything that has guided us, everything that does guide us, to maintain the liberties of the people is being violated by that one man. Mr. SEDDON. - No; I deny the soft impeachment. Captain RUSSELL. - Well, unfortunately, the honourable gentleman will joke, and a good many members will laugh at his jokes; but, Sir, I have the courage of my opinions, and I will divide the House on the question of going into Committee of Supply, and abandoning the position we should always take up of demanding redress of grievances before granting Supply. Common courtesy, at any rate, demanded that the Premier should have informed us on this side of the House what course he was going to adopt. The Bill comes before us, Sir, absolutely without precedent. On no previous occasion has a Supply Bill been brought before us until we have, at any rate, had an opportunity of reading the Speech of His Excellency. Mr. SEDDON. - No. Captain RUSSELL. - Well, at any rate, I cannot remember it. If I had been allowed time I would have looked into the matter, but, as it is, I have had to depend on my memory for my statements. Sir, I do hope the House will agree that there is no justification for this Bill, and that the Government is to blame for having put the House in an unfortunate position; and that there has been ample opportunity for calling Parliament together since the 31st March without interfering in any way whatsoever with the ordinary functions of the Government of the colony, and without interfering in any possible manner with our demonstrations of loyalty. Sir, I intend to divide the House on the question, because I am sure it is creating a bad principle, which must be apparent to all who have paid any attention to this subject. Mr. SPEAKER. - I would remind the Premier that two years ago his motion was to suspend Standing Order No. 414, in order to permit the Committee of Supply and Ways and Means to be set up before the Address in Reply is agreed to, so as to enable the Government to proceed with the Imprest Supply Bill this day. I presume he is following the precedent then established. Mr. J. ALLEN (Bruce). - There is no motion of that kind before the House. Mr. HERRIES (Bay of Plenty). - I understood the motion of the Premier was to go into Committee on the Bill. Mr. SEDDON (Premier). - I did move that the House go into Committee of the Whole; but—so as to set the matter right, I will, with your permission, follow the same course that was followed in the previous year. I would now ask leave to withdraw my former motion. Motion, by leave, withdrawn. Mr. SEDDON. - Now, Sir, I rise to

move, That Standing Order No. 414 be suspended, in order to permit the Government to proceed with the Imprest Supply Bill. I took it for granted that the House would well understand the situation. It is not the desire of the Government to violate Standing Orders or precedents; but, when an abnormal condition of things arises -- Captain RUSSELL .- It is not abnormal. Mr. SEDDON .- I say, Sir, that it is abnormal ; we have never had a visit of the Duke of Cornwall and York before. But then, Sir, one should never take anything for granted in this world. It was generally conceded, as far as I could discover without absolutely asking honourable members, that this course should be taken. That was the result of my inquiry. I submitted two proposals : one was to have a short session, and then to adjourn after the passing of the Imprest Supply Bill. That meant bringing members from all parts of the colony to Wellington, their being here for a few days, and then going back to their homes again. I say that would have been very inconvenient and very expensive. It would have been right enough for some members who live in Wellington, or who, when in Wellington, are within easy reach of their homes; but I considered that, as the head of the Government, it was my duty to consider the convenience of members as a whole. Then, coming to the conclusion that there would be inconvenience and expense from a short meeting of Parliament - of course, we ran the risk of the Imprest Supply being blocked - and I considered then, and I consider still, that under the extraordinary circumstances the House would pass the Imprest Supply Bill, because it is really only for the payment of the current expenditure. It is not as though there were anything introduced here which members could take exception to: and I think I am entitled to meet any argument that might be advanced to the effect that it has not been customary to bring down an Imprest Supply Bill until after the Speech from the Throne has been dealt with ; and, Sir, the honourable gentleman has not taken me into his confidence yet as to whether he is going to debate the Governor's Speech. Captain RUSSELL .- I have not read it yet. Mr. SEDDON .- Well, it will stand reading, and the sooner the honourable gentleman reads it the better. What I say is this : Last session there was no debate on the Imprest Supply Bill at all ; but, Sir, if there is to be, as I am told, a prolonged debate upon the Address in Reply on this occasion, what difference will there be if we adjourn this Bill for two or three days ? We shall then be in the middle of the Reply to the Speech from the Throne ; so that it is better, I think, and it is more convenient, to take this Bill now than to intercept the debate on the Speech from the Throne by the passing of the Imprest Supply Bill. Now, as to precedents,

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the honourable gentleman is entirely wrong, and if he looks at the authorities- Captain RUSSELL .- You gave me no opportunity. Mr. SEDDON .- Well, I saw you reading the Standing Orders all the afternoon, and looking up the subject. An Hon. MEMBER .- What are you quoting from ? Mr SEDDON .- I am quoting from May's " Parliamentary Practice," page 42, and members will find there that it says,- " Parliament, it has been seen, can only commence its deliberations at the time appointed by the Queen; neither can it continue them any longer than she pleases. She may prorogue by having her command Parliament signified, in her presence, by the Lord Chancellor or Speaker of the House of Lords to both Houses ; by Commission, or by Proclamation. Prior to 1867 the prorogation of Parliament from the day to which it stood summoned or prorogued to any further day was effected by a writ or Commission under the great seal ; but by the 30 and 31 Victoria, c. 81, the Royal Proclamation alone prorogues the Parliament, except at the close of a session." The paragraph goes on then to give the effect of the Proclamation ; but if honourable members will read on further they will see that there have been cases where Parliament has been opened and where the King never did it at all. It was impossible for him to do it- he was sick in bed ; and they proceeded with business Captain RUSSELL. - Not to grant supplies. Mr. SEDDON .- Any business. I say, Sir, in reply to the argument that we cannot proceed with business or cannot grant supplies, or that it has been done before, that we claimed our privileges and they were granted last session. You cannot deny that. As the representatives of the people we claimed our privileges. One of our

privileges is to grant Supply. One of the Governor's powers is to ask for Supply, and I say the Crown can ask for Supply at any time ; and, when it asks, the message of the Crown has to be dealt with the moment it is introduced, unless the House otherwise orders. Consequently, the prerogative of the Crown is exercised. The Crown has asked for supplies for simply current departmental expenditure, and We the expenditure is shown in the Bill. therefore, Sir, must perforce deal with the message. We propose to deal with it as now before the Chair. If there had been an invasion of our privileges, Mr. Speaker would be the first to protect this House against any infringement by the Crown upon those privileges; and there. fore for the leader of the Opposition to say we are not in a proper position to deal with this measure now is simply saying there has been an invasion of our privileges, and that the House is a party to that invasion. The honourable member himself admits that on former occasions we took the same course. In fact, I think we did it last year. Captain RUSSELL .- No ; the year before. Mr. SEDDON. - Oh, yes ; last year, of course, there was no debate on the Address. If it had | gain time and are not prepared with their not been that there was no debate on the Ad- dress last year we should have taken the same course. The practice has been for Parliament to meet at the end of June, and, where there is a prolonged debate, so as to avoid the emergency that is bound to arise we generally get the Bill through before the end of the month. I say now, this session it was impossible, owing to the extraordinary circumstances, to do so. If I had called the House together sooner, I feel satisfied there would have been exception taken. Members would not have liked to be put to the inconvenience, and the country to the expense, that would have been entailed by such a course ; and the only reason I could have given mem- bers for calling them together would have been that I wished to get Imprest Supply through. That would have been the only reason for call- ing the House together at the time the honour- able member indicates. As regards bringing down the Financial Statement, which, the honourable member states, is the controlling power of the House, if we had met in May there would have been no Financial Statement. There would simply have been the Speech from the Throne, the passing of an Imprest Supply Bill, and adjournment, so that the safeguard which the honourable member mentioned would have been entirely dispensed with. But there was more than that which I desire to bring under the notice of members. In the neigh- bouring continent there was the opening of the Commonwealth Parliament. A number of members signified to me that they were going to the opening of this Parliament. Certainly this colony, as a matter of courtesy, ought to be represented; and it was well represented by my worthy colleagues the Colonial Secretary and the Minister of Education. Now, I say, we cannot be in two places at once. The month mentioned, the beginning of May, was the time fixed for the opening of the Common- wealth Parliament, and the leader of the Legislative Council would have been away attending it, and also the Colonial Secre- tary, or otherwise the colony would not have been represented, and that would not have looked well when we desired to be neighbourly and to inculcate that nice spirit which at the present time obtains, and which I trust will be maintained. I think the honourable member has forgotten altogether the extraordinary posi- tion in which we were placed And then, if an emergency arises, it is not the rusty, fusty, musty old precedents which are hurled at us from time to time that are to be our guides. If that was the case the world would never progress at all ; we would never have had any advancement whatever. There is too much chaining and restraining people with these old precedents, and the sooner they are wiped away the better it will be, I believe, for humanity and for the good of the world. In fact, the honourable gentleman admits that his whole argument is based upon the fact that you should have this debate on the Speech from the Throne first. I have said years ago, and I repeat it now, that if the Government want to

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business, then they provoke a debate on the Speech from the Throne. Captain RUSSELL .- That is what you are doing now. Mr. SEDDON .- I am doing nothing of the sort. I want members to pass the Imprest Supply Bill, or I shall be just as pleased if they will agree to the Address in Reply at once and then go on

with the Imprest Supply Bill. Mr. J. ALLEN .- Do that now. Mr. SEDDON .- Well, I cannot very well do that, as the question would be at once raised by honourable members that notice of motion must be given. I am not going to be caught that way. There will possibly be a debate on the Address in Reply ; I think there will be myself. Mr. J. ALLEN .- You want it. Mr. SEDDON .- I assure you I do not. am quite prepared, members being willing, that the debate should stand over, and that we should bring down our measures and take the debate upon them. I can bring down twenty Bills to-morrow, and I am ready to go on with them ; so that members must not think they have caught the Government napping and unprepared. On the contrary, we are quite prepared with legislation, notwithstanding the visit of Royalty, and have never been better prepared any session before with business. However, I would not have said so much only that I want honourable members to understand this : It has been hurled at me time after time that I snap my fingers in members' faces, and that I do these things in an autocratic and dogmatic way. I say that I do nothing of the kind. The honourable member ought to know, and honourable members ought to know, that we have incurred a very great amount of expenditure during the last month, and it is not ordinary expenditure in the way of salaries. We shall have claims made by people who have rendered services during the last month, and it will look very bad, I think, on the part of the House and the country if we are not in a position to pay these accounts. I am not exposing any State secret when I tell honourable members that the Controller and Auditor-General has given it as his opinion that no payments are to be made out of Imprest until the House passes this Bill. I believe he has even gone further than that in respect to the matter ; and, as he is the legal authority and the check we have to depend upon, I feel satisfied that there is no chance whatever of meeting some of these claims, which I think ought to be met, and met as soon as possible. Now, if it was not for these extraordinary circumstances I would not ask the House to go on with the Bill at all ; but it is now the 2nd of July, and the Bill probably will not be through another place before to-morrow unless honourable members take to it in a more kindly way than the leader of the Opposition has. Therefore I think we ought to get this Bill out of the way, and then go straight on with the debate on the Speech from the Throne. It is my intention to bring down the Financial Statement at as early a date as possible, and, so far as I can, I will put honourable members in possession of every information which they are entitled to receive. Under the circumstances, therefore, I would like the House to commence the proceedings of the session in a businesslike way, and in asking what I am now I believe I am doing what is in the best interests of the colony. Mr. HERRIES (Bay of Plenty) .- Sir, I only wish to point out that the attitude the honourable member for Hawke's Bay has taken up is not antagonistic, as the Premier tried to make out, to the Imprest Supply Bill. We all recognise that the Bill will have to be passed, but this is a protest against the continual evasion of the Standing Orders of the House. The Premier inveighed against any interference with the privileges of the House, and yet he has laid down conditions that the most abject courtier of James II. would have been aghast at. He said that when a message comes down from the Crown demanding supplies we are to receive it with submission and pass it at once, notwithstanding all our privileges and in defiance of our Standing Orders. Mr. SEDDON .- No. Mr. HERRIES .- That is what I understood the right honourable gentleman to say. And he also inveighed against fusty and musty precedent. Why, this very motion of his depends on precedent. If it were not for the precedent of the year before last, and previous ones, the Speaker would not have allowed the motion to be put. It is fusty and musty precedent he relies on in this debate. Mr. SEDDON .- It is quite green yet. Mr. HERRIES .- Well, if the right honourable gentleman remains in office it will become fusty and musty, because he repeats it time after time. He always promises not to offend next year ; but next year he does the same thing again and again. Our Standing Order says distinctly that Committee of Supply shall not be set up until the Address in Reply has been adopted. If the Standing Order is contrary to the practice of the House, let us do away with it ; but so long as the Standing Orders are our rules-and as a young member I was told they were to be our rules, and so

studied them very carefully-so long as they are our rules, .I say that they should be carried out. The Premier may, in the opinion of the House, make out this time a good case for the suspension of this Standing Order or he may not; it is possible there is a good case; but it is this continual evasion of our Standing Orders in every way- a breaking of the law almost ; and I had to call attention this afternoon to an evasion of the law which the right honourable gentleman has continually practised in regard to the old-age pension regulations-this continual evasion of the Standing Orders in defiance of the law to which we, as representatives of the people, feel it our duty to call the attention of the House. I trust the honourable member for Hawke's Bay will divide the House. We do not want to intercept Supply, but to point out to the people that the Standing Orders of the House are continually being evaded and suspended at the pleasure of the Premier. Mr. G. W. RUSSELL (Riccarton). - Mr.

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Speaker, in the speech he delivered just now the Premier quoted a passage from May in support of the position he is taking up. As a matter of fact, the passage from May which he quoted has not the slightest reference in any shape or form to the matter which is before the House. It dealt solely with the question of the prorogation or adjournment of Parliament in the presence or otherwise of the sovereign. I will give him a quotation in May which does deal with the position before the House now. It is on page 554, where I find this passage :- " Action of the Commons on the Royal demand for a Supply .- The action taken by the House of Commons upon the demand of aid and supply for the public service made by the Speech from the Throne, is the appointment, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54, of those Committees of the whole House which are known as the Committee of Supply and the Committee of Ways and Means. Motions setting up these Committees are made immediately after the House agrees to the Address in answer to the Speech, and are put forthwith from the Chair, no interference being permitted." And our own Standing Order No. 414 is exactly in the same direction, for it says,- "The House appoints the Committees of Supply and Ways and Means at the commencement of every session so soon as an Address has been agreed to in answer to the Governor's Speech." You, Sir, being the guardian of the rights and privileges of this House for the purpose of seeing that the Standing Orders are complied with, I ask you to rule whether, in defiance of Standing Order No. 414-even although there may be a precedent for it-such a motion as is now before the House can be put. Mr. SPEAKER .- It is competent for such a motion to be made, as that of suspending No. 414. Standing Order No. 437 prescribes the course for suspending a Standing Order, with or without notice. Mr. J. ALLEN (Bruce) .-- Sir, I think the action that is being taken to-day must bring home very forcibly to members the obvious objection to holding the session of Parliament so late ; and still more so the objection to the estimates being brought down so late in the financial year. We are asked to-day to pass an Imprest Supply Bill, and the Premier has told us in his second speech that accounts are to be paid which are exceptional and extraordinary. Now, we shall pass this Imprest Supply not knowing anything about what the amounts are or anything about them. Mr. SEDDON .- You will have information. Mr. J. ALLEN .- What sort of information shall we get ? Very meagre information ; and the only real information about these matters will be when we get the estimates before us. But those estimates will not come on for many weeks, and when we do get them we shall be asked to agree to the accounts on the ground that they have already been paid. They will be paid under the authority of this Imprest Supply Bill, and the argument held up to us will be, "What is the use of your discussing these expenses ; we have already paid them ?" We know that that argument has been used in this House many a time before when the estimates were going through : " It does not matter whether you object to them or not ; the money is gone." Surely this is parting with the privileges of this House. Mr. SEDDON .- It is the case every session. Mr. J. ALLEN .- I know it is the case every session, and that is the argument I am using for bringing forward our estimates earlier in the session. This is the only Parliament in the world in which the estimates are brought down at so late a period of the session. Now,

with regard to "fusty precedent," I think we have a good deal to be thankful to precedent for. I do not think we need rely upon precedent to-day. What really I think the House ought to take exception to to-day is the method by which the Premier has sought to introduce this Bill to us. We have Standing Orders which are not musty and which are not fusty, having been amended by the House not many years ago; and directly contrary to those Standing Orders the Premier wishes to introduce a Bill to this House, and if it had not been for you, Sir, protecting our privileges we might have had this Bill passed entirely contrary to the Standing Order. The Premier in 1898, when he saw occasion to bring forward an Imprest Supply Bill before the Address in Reply was dealt with, adopted the proper course of moving the suspension of Standing Order No. 414. To-day he did not mention Standing Order No. 414. Mr. SEDDON. - Standing Order No. 414 related to the appointment of Committee of Supply. Mr. J. ALLEN. - Well, how can you get your Imprest Supply Bill unless you get your Committee of Supply and Committee of Ways and Means? This Standing Order prevents those Committees from being set up until the Address in Reply has been dealt with, and you cannot get your Imprest Supply Bill through unless you get those Committees set up. You know that perfectly well. It is this casting-aside of our own Standing Orders that I so strongly object to. These Standing Orders have been set up for our own safety; but they are set aside, and we might as well do away with this book of Standing Orders and go as we please. The Right Hon. the Premier admits he has no respect for precedent. Well, I am sorry he has no respect for precedent, and still more sorry to know that he has shown by his action this afternoon that he has no respect for our Standing Orders, and I am only too glad that you, Sir, in your place as the protector of the privileges of this House, noticed what the Premier was doing, and pulled him up and put him on the right course. As to Parliament being called so late this year, I do not know that there was any special reason for it. Truly, it might have been inconvenient to members to come here in May or earlier; but what are members elected for but to do the work of the country, and any member not willing to come here is not willing to do the work his constituents appointed him to do, and I maintain it would have been right,

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notwithstanding the exceptional circumstances, that an exceptional call of the House should have been made, and we should have been here before the visit of their Royal Highnesses to deal with this and other matters. As it is now, we shall be asked to pay money away, and are being asked to pay money away, of which we know nothing, and shall know nothing until the estimates come before us. That is not right; and I maintain that members of the House ought to insist upon knowing, no matter what side of the House they are on. As it is, no one knows what accounts are to be paid out of this Imprest Supply Bill, and no one can know except those in authority. Members are asked to vote away money absolutely in the dark, and that is not a right position for them to be put in. I do not know that it would be right for us at this stage to object to the passing of this Imprest Supply Bill, so long as the Premier follows the course that is in accordance with the Standing Orders and in accordance with precedent. Sir J. G. WARD (Colonial Secretary). - Sir, the honourable member who last spoke was trying to make the House believe that something very unusual was being proposed in asking that an Imprest Supply Bill be passed under such circumstances as those outlined by the Right Hon. the Premier. He says that if you pass this Imprest Supply Bill you are doing it without knowledge of the estimates, and that you ought to have the details of the expenditure before you pass it. Sir, ever since I have been a member of this House it has been customary for the first, second, and very often the third Imprest Supply Bill to be passed before the estimates were under consideration, or even a copy of the estimates was in the hands of members. That, I think I might almost say, has been the custom since the constitution of the colony. The honourable members who are raising that objection know perfectly well that it is necessary for the proper conduct of the services of the country to bring down the first, second, and not infrequently the third Imprest Supply Bill before the estimates are under consideration at all. Then, to this question of the suspension of the

Standing Orders, raised by the honourable leader of the Opposition, the member for Bruce, and the member for Riccarton, why, if honourable members turn to our own Standing Orders-and I am sure they have full knowledge of them-they will find that Standing Order No. 437 confers upon the House the power of suspending the Standing Orders whenever it desires for the purpose of having any matter placed before it for consideration. Standing Order No. 437 says, " Any Standing Order or Orders of the House may be suspended on motion made with or without notice," and all that it provides is that when without notice there shall be forty members present. There were forty members present to-day when the Premier's motion was moved. Members have striven to make it appear that there is something extraordinary in the proposal made, though it is actually in accordance with the Standing Orders, to enable is the position ? It is this : Every member of the House knows that, as a result of the visit of the Royal party to this colony, it became a question whether a short session of Parliament should be held for the purpose of passing moneys necessary to carry on the business of the country, or the deferring of the meeting of Parliament and then coming down promptly and asking the House to grant the necessary supplies for carrying on the business of the country. That is the position ; and surely honourable members have recognised that the visit that has just taken place has been desirable, and in the interests not only of this colony, but of the Empire itself, and that the deferring of the meeting of Parliament was made entirely to enable that visit to take place. That being so, it is surely the first duty of honourable members when they meet here, to enable the business of the country to be carried on, by assenting to the proposal of the Premier, and it might, I think, have been done without debate at all even. What is proposed is not an unusual thing. It is to be remembered, too, that this is a very late first Imprest Supply Bill. On no former occasion can I recollect a first Imprest Supply Bill being introduced so late; and it is late because of the circumstances to which I have just referred. The whole position is a very clear one. The Standing Orders provide that we may suspend any of our own Standing Orders. Provision is made for the suspension under the present conditions of certain Standing Orders to enable the business to be carried on. That course is being taken now, and if honourable members will refer to the Standing Orders they will find I am stating what is right. Mr. J. ALLEN .- After the Speaker called attention to it. Sir J. G. WARD .- There is not much in that. The Speaker was perfectly justified in calling attention to it. I am sure the Premier had no desire to do other than carry this Imprest Supply Bill through in the ordinary, and therefore the right, way. Mr. J. ALLEN .- Not in the right way : he wanted an extraordinary way. Sir J. G. WARD .- I am afraid that it is the extraordinary imagination of my honourable friend which has led him wrong in the matter. Briefly put, the position is a very clear one. We have been compelled upon this occasion to hold the meeting of Parliament at a later period than usual, which, owing to the Royal visit, was unavoidable. That being so, the necessity arises for the present suspension of the Standing Orders. The Auditor-General has called attention to the impropriety of spending money out of Imprest until we have the authorisation of Parliament to carry out the ordinary business of the country. I am sure honourable members desire to see the business carried out in a proper way. In reference to the extract from May read by the honourable member for Riccarton, if the honourable member had preceded that extract by reading the Standing Order I have just read he would at once have seen that our contention is a right one. If the honourable member

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power to suspend the Standing Orders, then he | Parliament is called together in this colony. It must realise that the quotation from May has no point, as the matter stands. I feel sure that honourable members will agree that nothing unusual or improper in any way, under the circumstances, is being proposed, and, indeed, that it is not possible to carry on the proper functions of government unless we adopt the course now proposed. Mr. T. MACKENZIE (Waihemo) .- It is not my intention to dwell upon the legality or otherwise of the suspension of the Standing Orders. I think that has been pretty well laid before

the House by the honourable member for Riccarton. And in that connection I must say that the honourable member for Dunedin City (Mr. Barclay), who is an authority on constitutional history, and also the honourable member for Auckland City (Mr. Napier), who is the great authority on parliamentary procedure, have a distinct grievance upon this occasion. They have no right whatever to be robbed of their recognised position in this House as law authorities, with respect to parliamentary practice being laid down, by the honourable member for Riccarton. I rather rose for the purpose of congratulating the Premier on having indicated to the House a course which, I venture to think, will meet with its full approval. He has told us that he is ready now with twenty of the most important measures that he intends to lay before Parliament, and that these measures are ready to be proceeded with. That has not been the history of previous Parliaments with which he has been connected. We have usually received measures of indifferent importance for the first month or six weeks. Then, when 5.0. members were pretty nearly driven #cc-zero into an asylum, as the member for Christ-church City (Mr. Lewis) and other members were last session, we have the important parliamentary work of the session brought down, when we were mentally and physically unfit to consider it. Sir, we therefore congratulate the Premier on his intention to bring the important legislation before the House at an early stage. On the question of musty precedents and Standing Orders, we all know we have seen these Orders frequently violated by the Premier. The honourable gentleman, in effect, says, "Confound your precedents, frustrate your musty tricks, and give me power." The honourable gentleman now wants the Standing Orders to be shifted about just as he wishes ; but, for my own part, I consider we should adhere to precedents. They have been the protection of the minority in this House and the protection of the people of the country in the past. I do not think, however, much harm can be done in granting what the Premier now asks. We know the circumstances of the case, and, for myself, I consider it would have been highly improper to have had two sessions this year. It would have put the country to great expense, and on that and on other grounds I think the Premier was wise in not having two sessions. I am, however, distinctly opposed to the late period at which should be called together earlier in the year, so that those honourable members who are connected with the agricultural pursuits might get back to their work before it is too late in the season. However that may be, Sir, I merely wish to repeat that my main object in rising was to congratulate the Premier on his intention to bring down the important measures early in the session, and to keep other measures of lesser importance until the closing hours. Captain RUSSELL (Hawke's Bay) .- Sir, I wish to protest against one or two principles laid down by the Right Hon. the Premier. He commenced his remarks by saying it would have been impossible, without disturbing the country members, to call the House together at an earlier period of the year than the present. I understood him to say that he had by circular learned that by- Mr. SEDDON .- No. Captain RUSSELL. - I understood the honourable gentleman to say he had consulted members as to the period of the year that would suit them to meet in Wellington. I was, unfortunately, away in Australia, and was not consulted. Mr. SEDDON .- I ascertained as well as I could without actually consulting them. Captain RUSSELL .- Yes, that is the custom the Premier always adopts. He knows what he wants himself, and thinks everybody else must want the same. However, I do not agree with the assumption that honourable members would have objected to come to a short session. It need not have been a question of two sessions in the year. It might have been only a matter of adjourning for a month, when members would have been called together again. The other principle I object to was also laid down by the Premier-namely, that because some of his colleagues wanted to go for a pleasant holiday and disport themselves on the Commonwealth the whole of the business of the colony should stand still, and that precedents-however musty, but which, I think, are of extreme value -- should be set aside. We have been told a great deal about Standing Orders yet, unfortunately, it is the practice in this House to practically annihilate the Standing Orders whenever the Right Hon. the Premier wishes to assert his will. No person, however, can read this 437th Standing

Order without it being perfectly palpable to him that, although we are not going to violate the letter of the Standing Order, the whole principle and spirit of the Standing Order is going to be violated. That is perfectly plain. It says, -- "Any Standing Order or Orders of the House may be suspended on motion made with or without notice." And it is on that portion of the Standing Order only on which the Right Hon. the Premier relies at the present moment--"with or without notice." But it goes on to say,--"Provided that notice extending over two clear days, and specifying the hour at which such motion will be made, shall always be given

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without notice shall not be entertained unless there be forty members present at the time such motion is made," et cetera. Now, my reading of that portion of the Standing Order is that it is perfectly clear that when this Parliament framed this Standing Order it never for one instant contemplated such an extraordinary position as the Standing Orders being suspended without very considerable notice, and Parliament having the opportunity of saying "aye" or "no" in the matter. Again, with reference to this "musty precedent," there has been an endeavour to confuse the minds of honourable members with regard to the question of Supply and the question of the Financial Statement. That may have been done possibly because I argued that the House ought to have been called together earlier--that, as our financial year ends on the 31st March, there was no reason, I argued, why Parliament should not be called together, at any rate, by the middle of May, and I quoted the example of the Mother-country, where Parliament is called together always within a period of one month after the end of the financial year. But the whole question is the great constitutional question of the granting of supplies before the redress of grievances has been agreed to, and that redress of grievances, honourable members can see, is one of the bulwarks of our liberties; and unless we are to be dominated, as I maintain we are now, not by the Crown, as was the case in former days, but by a mere autocratic Minister, we must insist that the Standing Orders shall be observed on every possible occasion. If any one will consult May, edition 1863, he will find the following laid down, on page 660 :--"The ancient constitutional doctrine, that the redress of grievances is to be considered before the granting of supplies, is now represented by the practice of permitting every description of amendment to be moved on the question for the Speaker leaving the chair before going into Committee of Supply or Ways and Means." The ancient constitutional practice has been, before the going into Committee of Supply and the Committee of Ways and Means, to debate the Address from the Throne ; and we are now invited before we attempt to have a redress of grievances--absolutely before the House knows anything whatever as to the expenditure that it is asked to vote--to pass an Imprest Supply Bill on the very first day of the session ; and I maintain it is the duty of every honourable member who believes that the Standing Orders ought to be preserved in their integrity, in order to safeguard the rights of the minority and in order to maintain the welfare of our country, to vote against the suspension of the Standing Orders on this occasion. Mr. ELL (Christchurch City) .- I have often been very much amused to hear the honourable member for Hawke's Bay complain about the autocratic power and conduct of the Premier. Whoever may be the Prime Minister of this country for the time being--whether it be the honourable member for Hawke's Bay or the honourable member for Westland--we find that the Prime Minister for the time being gathers about himself on those benches anybody he thinks fit. He does not consult members of this House. The Government are the Executive of this House, but we have no power over them. The Prime Minister may select the weakest men in the House, and we have to calmly submit to it. Does the honourable member for Hawke's Bay propose to help us out of this difficulty ? No. Captain RUSSELL .- Bring down a decent Bill. Mr. ELL .- Let the honourable gentleman assist us to pass a decent Bill. But on every opportunity that presents itself he is one of the most vigorous opponents to the Bill in this House. An Hon. MEMBER .- What sort of Bill ? Mr. ELL .- I mean a Bill to give members of this House the power of saying who shall sit on the Treasury

benches of this Chamber. It seems to me that, instead of devoting an hour this afternoon to discussing the question as to what the existing powers are, had we devoted the time to discussing measures to give more power to the Chamber over its Executive, and to take power out of the hands of the Executive, we should, perhaps, have done more good. The power in the hands of the Executive-and they have considerable power-should be taken out of their hands and placed in the hands of the members of this House. Who has a better right to say who is to be Minister for Railways, who is to be Minister for Public Works, who shall be Minister of Mines, who shall be Minister of Education, and who shall be Minister of Lands than the members of this House ? But, Sir, the honourable member for Hawke's Bay is so much attached to ancient precedent that he is not prepared to help us out of that difficulty. Mr. BARCLAY (Dunedin City). - Mr. Speaker, I shall not detain the House at any great length, and, indeed, I should not have risen at all except for a remark which fell from the honourable member for Hawke's Bay. I understand the honourable member for Wai- hemo made some reference to me while I was temporarily absent from the Chamber, and I am accordingly not very clear as to what he actually said. What the honourable gentleman says, however, is generally of no very great im- portance, so that there will be no necessity for me to take any particular notice of it. I should like, however, to say a word as to what the honourable member for Hawke's Bay states is the constitutional doctrine : that there should be no supplies before redress of grievances. Well, Sir, it is quite true that at one time it was found necessary that the supplies should be given only on the last day of the session of Parliament. That became the practice at a time when the Crown had the power of vetoing at its will any measures which were put forward by Parliament. That was mainly done in the time of the Plantagenets. But the times have very greatly changed, and it is not now correct to say that it is a principle of the Consti- tution that there shall be no supplies granted

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without redress of grievances ; otherwise there | items of an unusual and extraordinary nature could not possibly be any supplies given at all until the very last day of the session, as in those times to which I have referred. The reason for that practice is perfectly plain : be- cause Parliament used to grant supplies on the strength of promises by the sovereign, and those promises were very often not carried out. Bills at that time, too, were not introduced in the form they are now. Petitions were presented to Parliament, and it was left for the Clerk of Parliament and the other officials to turn them into statutes after Parliament had dissolved. When that was done it was frequently found that the Bills were not at all like the petitions that had been presented. It was therefore found necessary to grant supplies only on the last day of the session, when everything that had been desired had been obtained by Parlia- ment from the Crown. When the power of the Crown to veto Bills became obsolete, the prac- tice of redressing grievances before granting supplies became unnecessary, and cannot now be said to be a principle of the Constitution. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .- After what has fallen from the honourable member for Dunedin City it is unnecessary for me to say anything. I can only say we are acting in accordance with precedent. I also desire to submit that I have known the Standing Orders to be suspended with the sanction and consent of the leader of the Opposition, and of every member of the Opposition, and the Standing Orders were sus- pended to pass five millions of money in as many minutes. Captain RUSSELL .- When was that ? Mr. SEDDON .- When your portmanteaux were packed, and you were ready to go home, at the end of the session. The House divided. AYES, 39. Palmer Allen, E. G. Guinness Hanan Arnold Parata Seddon Barclay Hogg Bennet Houston Stevens Steward Buddo McGowan Mckenzie, R. Carroll Symes McLachlan Colvin Tanner Thompson, R. McNab Duncan Meredith Ell Ward Field Millar Willis. Fisher Tellers. Mills Flatman Morrison Collins Gilfedder. Fraser, A. L. D. Napier Graham NOES, 12. Mackenzie, T. Thomson, J. W. Allen, J. Hardy Rhodes Tellers. Russell, G. W. Herries Hutcheson Russell, W. R. Massey. Lang Lethbridge Majority for, 27. Motion agreed to. On the motion, That the message be referred

to Committee of the Whole, Mr. MEREDITH (Ashley) said,-I hope I shall be in order in asking the Premier to be good enough to explain what I understand to be in the Bill now proposed to be submitted to Parliament. I am not prepared to vote for a measure in globo. If the Bill contains only ordinary items of expenditure to which the colony is committed by consent of the House I shall offer no objection ; but I understand there are some items of an unusual nature, and, such being the case, I should like to hear some explanation given to the House, so that we might know what we are about to vote for. Mr. SEDDON (Premier) .- I will do so. There is a sum of £60,000 for railway stores which is immediately come to charge under the vote of Public Works. Mr. MEREDITH .- Is that the only item ? Mr. SEDDON .- Yes ; there is £50,000 in- creased charges upon the consolidated revenue ; that is all-nothing more. Motion agreed to. Committed. Resolution committed, agreed to, and re- ported to the House. Bill read a first time. On the question, That the Bill be read a second time, Mr. HERRIES (Bay of Plenty) .- Sir, I under- stand that on the second reading of this Bill we can discuss any subjects mentioned in the Bill. I have just been looking over the ac- counts of the balances of the liabilities due on the 31st March, as laid on the table of the House this afternoon, and I notice that in the vote for roads and bridges there was no less a sum than £437,000 as a liability on the 31st March ; and I take it that that means that the country settlers are being defrauded of the money voted last year by the sum of £437,000, as it has not been spent. Now, Sir, I would say, on behalf of the local bodies, that the greatest difficulty is always found in getting the Government to spend before the 31st March the money that is voted on the estimates. The Treasury seems to be a sort of Tite Barnacle in regard to that money, and the very fact that the sum of £437,000 was not ex- pended on the 31st March shows that the local bodies have great cause of complaint. In my own district we have year after year sums voted that are never spent. An Hon. MEMBER .- What district ? Mr. HERRIES .- The Bay of Plenty ; and I wish the honourable gentleman would come and visit that district, and he would see that what I say is a fact. It applies to all country districts, and I say that the circumstance of having this sum as a liability on the 31st March does not reflect credit on the Govern- ment. Mr. SEDDON .- It is a liability in connec- tion with work that the colony is committed to, and the expenditure is going on. Mr. HERRIES .- Yes, that is so, in some instances ; but in others the spending has not commenced, and the honourable gentleman knows that on the next year's estimates the amount has to be revoted. We know that when we go to the Hon. the Minister of Lands it is just as hard to get these unexpended moneys re- voted as it is to get new sums voted. Every

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member of a country district will bear me out in that fact. I say that this liability does not reflect credit on the Government. We have heard in the Speech from the Throne to-day that the Government are seriously consider- ing the question of roading and the ques- tion of Crown settlement ; but when we find out that there is a liability of £437,000-I have not had time to look up and find what the total voted was, but I guarantee that this is half of the vote that was passed last year- - Mr. SEDDON .- That is works under con- tract. Mr. HERRIES .- The honourable gentleman need not draw a red-herring across the track. This sum has to be revoted this year, and the consequence is that of the total amount that will be voted this year £437,000 will be money that was voted the previous year. There is another reason the Government do not want this sum of \$437,000 to be spent. If it is voted but not available for local bodies, or for expen- diture by the Government itself, from the mo- ment the Appropriation Bill is passed it is simply for the reason of swelling the surplus. The Premier will say that the Public Works Fund is quite different from the Consolidated Fund, and does not affect the surplus ; but if this £437,000 was spent we should have to have a larger sum transferred from the Con- solidated Fund, and therefore it would affect the surplus in the Consolidated Fund. And we also find out that in the vote for rail- ways there is £591,000 of liabilities. That means that on the 31st March £591,000 which was voted had not been spent; and yet the settlers are complaining about want of railway accommodation, for this applies both to the open railways and to

the railways to be opened in the future. It behoves the Government to see that the money voted every year is spent ; and, if they do so, they will meet a very just demand of the country settlers. I guarantee that if every country member expressed his true mind he would say that this is the greatest fault of the land-settlement policy of the Government. Every one knows that the settlers are charged large sums on their sections for road-making, and yet they have never got a road. An Hon. MEMBER .- Why did not the local bodies claim the votes ? Mr. HERRIES .- They do so, but, owing to red-tape or some other reason, they are generally prevented from getting the money until after the 31st March. I think one of the first things we should try and settle this session is some way by which the money voted shall be spent as soon as possible after it is voted. Mr. DUNCAN (Minister of Lands) .- The honourable member is completely wrong. If we spent before the 31st March all the money voted, how would the work of the country be carried on up till the present time? It would mean that public works would be standing idle. Why, in the honourable member's own district authorities have been given for a considerable sum above the votes which were passed -authority has been given for £200,000 over and above the votes upon the estimates. Mr. MASSEY (Franklin) .- In spite of what has been said by the Minister of Lands, I have a great deal of sympathy with the remarks made by the honourable member for the Bay of Plenty with respect to the question of the expenditure of parliamentary grants before the 31st March, the end of the financial year, because if these grants are not spent before that date-if they are not spent during the dry weather-then the settlers do not get the value of their money. We all know that roadworks cannot be done so well or economically during the winter as if done during the summer. So far as the Imprest Supply Bill is concerned, I recognise that the liabilities have been incurred, and that under the circumstances we have got to give authority to the Executive for the payment of these moneys ; but for all that I think we are entitled, as representatives of the people, to have the utmost possible information on every item mentioned in the Bill. I notice, though, that it is proposed to give the Ministry power to spend £100,000 more than was provided for in the first Imprest Supply Bill of last year. One hundred thousand pounds is a very large sum of money, and we were told in a jaunty manner by the Premier that it includes £60,000 in connection with the vote for railway stores. I would like to know whether that £60,000 includes the amount paid for railway carriages and engines recently imported from America. I think we ought to have information on that point. An Hon. MEMBER .- They are not railway stores. Mr. MASSEY .- They are railway requirements; but I think that we ought to be informed fully with respect to the contract for those carriages. Was it let by tender? Was an opportunity given to people in the colony to construct the carriages ; and who got the commission, if there was any commission paid ? Personally, I think an opportunity should be given to the people in the colony to construct the railway-carriages. On every occasion possible money should be kept in the country, even if the articles required cost more. Then, referring to the item "Public works," there have been very disquieting rumours in circulation lately about the construction of the Makohine Viaduct. I have seen it in the Press that one of the piers has slipped, and I have also seen it stated that the manager of the works has applied for an extension of time. The House should certainly know whether these statements are correct. We ought to know whether the £130,000 voted for that work last year was expended before the end of the financial year. Coming to a grievance in connection with the conduct of parliamentary affairs, I desire to say that several returns were ordered by Parliament last year and were not placed on the table by the end of the session, nor have they yet been supplied to members since then. One, in particular, was a return showing the Ministerial travelling-expenses for the year ended 31st March, 1900, and I hope it will be supplied to members at the earliest possible date. There are many other matters that might be dealt

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with in connection with this Bill. However, I hope that when the Premier rises to reply he will give information with regard to the points I have mentioned. Mr. SEDDON (Colonial Treasurer) .- Sir, I shall

deal with the questions at once. First of all, I wish to say that the member for the Bay of Plenty has quite an erroneous idea with regard to the liabilities. As a matter of fact, he ought to be delighted that the colony is committed to the expenditure. We let contracts which may not be completed at the 31st March, but at the same time there may be a liability. Well, of course, you cannot stop the work suddenly on that date; but to meet a case of the kind Parliament gives us authority to expend for another three months. That is what has happened in connection with the works in the honourable member's own district. If the honourable gentleman objects I shall have to suggest to the Minister in charge and to the departmental officers to stop short with the work on the 31st March, and have nothing at all done until Parliament again meets and votes money for works. Will the honourable gentleman ask me to put him in that position? Mr. HERRIES .- If you start them at the proper time. Mr. SEDDON .- They are all started. In fact, the general complaint is that the honourable gentleman's district takes a large sum of money; and I do not say it does not need it, because it is a district in which settlement is going on. I quite believe there are other members of the House who would be very glad indeed to be in the same position as the honourable gentleman with respect to the expenditure of money in their districts, because when works are in that position money must be voted for them-the colony is committed to them. I was really astounded to hear the honourable gentleman's remarks. As to the non-expenditure of public-works money going into the surplus, I think that only one who has not seen work outside a parish Board would make such a statement. The non-expenditure of the consolidated revenue does come in as a saving, and helps to swell the surplus, but not otherwise. Mr. HERRIES .- That is £206,000. Mr. SEDDON .- There, again, the honourable gentleman is wrong. If he will look at the Public Accounts he will find the non-expenditure under Consolidated Fund was £63,000, so that I must again correct him, and remind him that he is now at school. The remarks made by the honourable member for Franklin certainly demand some little attention. I may tell him that, as far as the Government are concerned, it has always been our desire to manufacture our rolling-stock, and, as stated in the Speech from the Throne to day, we hope, now the abnormal condition in respect to the railways and the necessity for rolling-stock has been overcome, that we shall be able to construct our locomotives as well. We could not get them made in Great Britain in the time the conditions required, although we tried our best, and we had to meet the abnormal demand upon the railways for the carriage of grain and meat. The Mr. Massey order went direct from the Government to the manufacturers in Great Britain; and here I might say, in reply to an interjection as to commission, and which implied more than what was said, that there has not been any intermediate person between the Government and the manufacturers, and it is as well to meet any suggestion of that kind at once. As regards the Makohine Viaduct, the Minister for Public Works is not here, but I may say at once that there is no ground whatever for the statement which appeared in the papers respecting that work; and the Government Engineer, Mr. Hay, immediately wrote a memorandum to the Minister for Public Works absolutely denying that there was the slightest foundation for the statement. With regard to the expenditure on the North Island Trunk Railway, it will be seen when the Public Works Statement comes down-and, in fact, I may mention before the Statement comes down- that we have kept up to the amount we stated we would expend. The only main trunk line of railway in regard to which complaint could be made at all in connection with the expenditure was the Otago Central, and the reason of that is that a statement showing how £11,000 was spent only came in after the end of the financial year, and could not be included in this year's accounts; hence the Statement will show that £11,000 less was expended than was actually expended, and owing to something occurring in the transmission of the memorandum from the Government Engineer, Mr. Ussher, this amount did not come to debit during the year. We are acting in accordance with the estimates passed by the House, and we are pushing on these works vigorously. I say also that the Minister for Public Works will keep faith with the House and country, and hopes to complete the North Island Trunk Railway within the time he told the country it would be

done. An Hon. MEMBER .-- What time ? Mr. SEDDON .- Four years. Mr. MASSEY .- Is it correct that the manager at Makohine has applied for an extension of time ? That has been stated in the Press. Mr. SEDDON. - All I know is this : that everything possible has been done to get that viaduct completed. Bill read a second and a third time. The House adjourned at five minutes to six o'clock p.m.