

ment, the cry we should hoist would be, reduction of taxation. When we state, therefore, that we cannot honestly hold out the hope of any material reduction of taxation this year, we know that we are doing a thing which will lay us open to very great odium, and which will cause disappointment throughout the country. I concur with my honourable friend the member for Waimea that many people will feel disappointed that there is not some reduction. In reference to this question of taxation, I must, however, take leave to say that I must not be supposed to concur in the pictures that have been drawn by some gentlemen, to the effect that all the evils of the country result from its taxation. It is perfectly true that there is depression in certain branches of trade, and that there is in some places a want of employment for those who depend mainly on their thews and sinews for the maintenance of themselves and their families; but I contend the people of the colony generally have been in a very prosperous state under exactly the same taxation as we have now to pay. It might not be inopportune if I were briefly to trace the different circumstances which, quite apart from taxation, have caused a depression in certain parts of New Zealand. The first serious depression unmistakably originated in the Province of Southland, so far back as 1863. At that time every other part of the country was in a state of great prosperity and progress. All classes were well employed, and were making money. Merchants had increasing business, and revenue and trade were increasing hand over hand. Yet Southland was at that time, and has continued to the present day, in a state of prostration, which could not be attributed to the taxation which its inhabitants paid in common with those in other portions of the country who were at that time so prosperous. No, the real cause of the depression of Southland was that it had rushed into a rash and unwarrantable expenditure, and had contracted large liabilities which it could not meet, and heavy debts which it could not discharge. That province had, in the two preceding years, rushed into unwarranted expenditure by means of borrowed money, which was used up about the end of the year 1863. They had then come to the end of their borrowing, and were left to pay the interest and sinking fund which the loans entailed. The expenditure in Southland was suddenly stopped, and the consequent stoppage of trade and employment which ensued produced a panic which led to a large re-emigration of persons whom the previous large expenditure had attracted to the province. That was the cause, and not taxation, which first led to the depression of Southland. Well, the next marked retrogression was in the neighbouring Province of Otago, although it did not commence for nearly two years afterwards.

(f.) At the rate of 150 words per minute. Takes 5 minutes.

Sir, the duty which I have to perform this day is not only an unusual one, but one invested with an interest and importance amounting to solemnity. I have to call the attention of the House away from the narrow sphere of local politics and party struggles, and from the limited scenes which usually absorb our attention, and to fix it upon the momentous events which are passing in the land of our birth, and upon the drama which is enacting upon the great stage of the civilised world. And if, Sir, I could for a moment exclude from my mind the particular occasion of this motion, and the great calamity to which it refers, I confess I should welcome an opportunity which tended to elevate our thoughts for a time above the consideration of our own comparatively insignificant fortunes, and to place us in communion with the feelings and impulses of our fellow-countrymen in England, and to excite our interest in the policy and conduct of the Empire to which we belong, and to the part which she is called upon to play in the history of the world. England is at war; and the announcement of this fact by His Excellency affords us a fitting opportunity for renewing our assurances of attachment to our country and of allegiance to our Sovereign. I will not insult the House by doubting for a moment what its feelings must be. I know that every generous impulse and every deepest sympathy of our hearts must be with our home, our countrymen, and our Queen. It might be sufficient for us to know that Her Majesty has declared war, to know that the cause is a holy and a just one. I speak not of the dictates of the heart of that illustrious lady, who has wielded the sceptre of this Empire with such singular perception of the constitutional position which she has inherited; who has become, as a monarch should ever become, the very impersonation of right and justice in her age and country; though, in those personal attributes, I should have ample guarantee that her subjects would not have been plunged into the horrors of war without strong and stern necessity: but when I recollect the names of those who immediately surround Her Majesty's throne—men, some of venerable age, whose life has been passed in counselling the maintenance of peace; men of high and deep Christian principle, to whom war must bring a bitter pang; men of philosophic schemes of human improvement, to whom war can only bring disappointment—when I think of these men counselling their Sovereign to take up arms, I am satisfied that the war is one which is sanctified by the object and necessitated by the cause. Sir, Her Majesty has stated that cause in simple and dignified terms in the Declaration. It may not be out of place that I should refer to the events which have led to it. It is to defend Turkey from the aggression of Russia. Since the time when Europe emerged from the stern and savage struggles of its early history, and in the march of civilisation exchanged uncompromising force for skilful and enlightened diplomacy, the doctrine of the balance of power amongst the European States has gradually acquired the form of an axiom in all European politics. And at various times, in negotiations and stipulations and treaties, it has been recognised by the common consent of all, and has been stated with more or less distinctness, that the nations of Europe would invariably unite to prevent the aggrandisement of power by any one State to such an extent as to peril the liberties of the other States of the Continent. And this doctrine was ratified by the treaties at the close of the last war—a war, if not undertaken, yet carried on for so many years, and at so vast a cost, only to place limits to the insatiable ambition of a ruler who had resolved to enslave the world. By those treaties it was determined not only to maintain the great and strong but also the small and feeble States of Europe in their just and right powers and possessions. And amongst them it was specially determined that the power of the Sultan should be preserved, as a necessary check to the growing strength of Russia. It is not to be inferred that there is any sympathy on the part of England with the religion or policy or form of the government of the Sultan.