

of the people it represents, and I cannot believe it will retire humiliated and beaten before the menaces of a sordid self-interest which resides outside the sphere of its dominion.

## CONCLUSION.

Summary of the past year's policy and results.

I have sketched in outline the financial policy of the past year, and have indicated the provision we have made to carry on the public service for the year on which we have entered. In many directions the Committee will have seen evidences of strength and progress. It was no small thing that we were able to pay off £200,000 of the floating debt in one year, one-half the amount coming out of revenue; that we should have devoted £30,000 out of revenue for roads and bridges, and made good from the same source the deficit of the Land Fund. Above and beyond this, I have had the gratification of announcing a splendid surplus of £165,000 brought over from last year, due partly to the improved position of the great body of consumers who contribute to the revenue through the Customs, and partly to economical administration. The people had more to spend and have had the courage and heart to spend more in this direction than in previous years. Economy on the expenditure side is seen in the "Unauthorised," which is the smallest on record; while the "Liabilities" have also touched low-water mark, showing that payments were promptly made, and none held over. Many of the difficulties attending industrial employment have been overcome, and what has been accomplished may inspire us with the hope that the time is not far distant when a satisfactory solution of the labour problem will have been discovered. In the introduction of a new system of taxation many obstacles stood in the way and had to be overcome. The result on the whole has been as successful as the strongest advocate of the principles on which it is founded could have desired. The great departments of the Government have been administered with vigour and prudence. The lands have been disposed of for the benefit of the people, and not in the interest of speculators; and checks, as far as the law allowed, have been placed on monopoly. The difficult and delicate task of converting some of our loans has been satisfactorily performed through the agency of the Bank of England.

Summary of proposals for the current year.

Coming to the current year, proposals are submitted for the acquisition of Native and private lands for the purpose of settlement. A system of pensions and insurance for the Civil Service is proposed which entails neither expense nor liability to the colony, yet is sufficient to provide an independence in old age, or material assistance to the family in case of death. Public works have been provided for out of surplus revenue, after every obligation has been discharged. The people are beginning to recognise that New Zealand affords as much chance of employment within its own shores as any other country, and the loss of population through greater attractions in neighbouring colonies is in all probability at an end. There is, however, still much to be done to promote the comfort and happiness of our fellow-colonists, for whom as legislators we are the trustees.

Conclusion.

I have noticed at some length the policy of Self-reliance on which we have entered, and it will be unnecessary, in conclusion, to do more than remind the Committee of the state of affairs from which we are trying to emerge, and of the opinions widely entertained of this colony but recently in the capital of the Empire. It is not more than five years since a powerful journal—the *London Standard*—wrote of New Zealand in these terms: "Here is a colony wasting millions of loans because it could not pay its way without them. A colony in the true sense is not what we find, but a soil in the grasp of speculators—a people huddled into town, dependent upon public works for subsistence; municipalities joyfully dispensing other people's money; a land of banks, mortgage companies, and finance companies; a community whose very life is jobbed away on the Stock Exchange with no more thought than if it were so much hemp." The indictment is fierce and bitter and overdrawn. But to some extent, unfortunately, it was not absolutely unfounded. If Parliament is resolutely determined to remove every trace of the charges contained in the indictment, it has it in its power to do so. It may, in spite of every possible resistance, release the land which is still in the grasp of speculators; it may commence to erect the structure of our financial independence, and at length restore to the people their heritage, free from the hand of the spoiler.

I sincerely thank the Committee for its attention.