

1900.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEFENCES OF THE COLONY:

STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT HON. R. J. SEDDON, PREMIER AND MINISTER OF DEFENCE,
RESPECTING HARBOUR DEFENCES, COLONIAL DEFENCE FORCES, IMPERIAL RESERVE,
CADET CORPS, RIFLE-CLUBS, AND OTHER MATTERS CONNECTED WITH THE DEFENCES OF
THE COLONY.

Made in the House of Representatives, 20th July, 1900.

MR. SPEAKER,—

Honourable members will, I hope, agree with me that it is consistent with one's duty to the Empire and to the colony, and not out of place, to give attention at this juncture to the all-important subject of our defences, and, if possible, to evolve a means of perfecting, extending, and strengthening the same, both for internal and external purposes.

The equipping and sending of our contingents, and the lessons taught by the war in South Africa, must not be ignored. We must not be blind to the altered conditions that have arisen during the last few months, and which at present may appear trifling, but which in years to come may be a source of anxiety to the colony and the Empire.

There are also eventualities that may arise in connection with the adjustment of affairs in China; and, taking the outlook as a whole, it is prudent for us to complete our harbour defences, increase and fully equip our Volunteer corps, give a military training to our youths, encourage rifle-clubs, and, in addition, create a reserve force equal to any emergency.

The chief drawback has been the finding of the capital required for the completion of our harbour defences, the equipment of the defence forces, the purchase of great and small arms and munitions of war. Important as these are, still, the opening-up and roading of our land, the construction of railways, and the development of our industries have been such a tax upon our resources that expenditure in regard to harbour defences, defence forces, rifle-clubs, and cadet corps has had, perforce, to be curtailed.

I therefore, with much reason, urge that it would be of advantage to the Mother-country and to the colonies if the moneys required for harbour defences and for arming the defence forces were raised by the Imperial authorities and advanced to the colony, which should pay interest thereon at the rate of 3 per cent. per annum. In the calculation of this interest the difference between the rate at which the colony could raise the moneys and the rate at which it is obtained by the Imperial authorities would form a sinking fund to pay off the principal within a reasonable time.

The proposal that the Imperial authorities should find the capital is warranted by the fact that the imperfect defences of the colonies would be remedied. There would also be the direct advantages to the Imperial authorities and the Empire in having a reserve force established ready for any contingency that might arise, and in having the most modern guns and small arms in the colonies, to the use of which our forces would be trained, and be available whenever required.

There are in New Zealand thousands of men capable of bearing arms, many of them trained, good riders, and good shots; yet we have in the colony rifles only for one-fourth of their number. Again, there is a large number of men of the Native race who are well capable of bearing arms. In the past we have had a taste of the fighting qualities of the Maoris, both of those against and those with us; in fact, had it not been for the "friendlies" the troubles would not have ended so speedily or successfully as they did. All now, I am happy to

Lessons taught
by sending
contingents to
South Africa.

Altered condi-
tions.

Want of capital.

Ways and means.

Interest and
sinking fund.

Reserve an
advantage.

Thousands of
men available.

Maoris would
enrol in reserve.