

Principle of non-political control of Public Service to be extended.

Finance Committee to consider Bills dealing with adjustment of taxation, including Stamp and Death Duties, Land and Income Tax, &c.

Surplus to be utilized for assisting Consolidated Fund.

Loan certificates for small amounts to be available to the public.

Total to be provided by loans, including £10,000,000 for renewals, £24,800,000.

Authority to be provided for compulsory levy for certain loans.

Legislation relating to banking to be introduced.

Register for New Zealand Consolidated Stock, 1877, domiciled in London, to be opened in New Zealand.

Shipping and mail-services to be improved.

Westport Harbour to be taken over by Government.

Scientific research to be encouraged.

Town-planning proposals.

Total estimated revenue, £27,712,700 ; estimated expenditure, £26,893,497.

Economies to be effected in administration of all State activities.

CONCLUSION.

I desire, in conclusion, to state that owing to the unrest which at present obtains, and the demands that are being made for largely increased expenditure, I have fully and plainly set out the financial position of the Dominion, which I consider is satisfactory, if not altogether free from anxiety.

Our responsibilities are great ; nevertheless they are not greater than this country, with its wonderful resources, can support, and, always provided that its finances are administered with prudence and economy, a prosperous future is assured.

The margin between the annual increase in revenue and expenditure is diminishing to such an extent that increased expenditure in one direction must be met by a decrease in another, or by the imposition of fresh charges. Honourable members will, I am sure, recognize that demands for concessions cannot be considered without regard to the financial consequences, and that claims for increased expenditure are not consistent with the demand for a reduction in taxation. We cannot increase our expenditure if we diminish our resources, as there is no great reservoir of wealth which can be drawn upon at will. The heavy expenditure which was so cheerfully met during the war period cannot be continued on the same lavish scale, and there must be a tapering-off, with due regard to reconstruction requirements and the urgent necessity for developing our resources ; but economy, without parsimony, is essential. Anything approaching waste or extravagance must be eliminated from all State activities, so that full value may be ensured to the taxpayer in return for his expenditure. In this connection the Government will, without fear or favour, party motive, or personal interest, conscientiously discharge its duty to the community—not in the selfish interests of any class, but for the good of all.

What I have said with regard to the necessity for prudence and economy in the administration of the State applies equally to private finance and the possibility of over-speculation. In times of high prices people are credulous, and new schemes for the employment of capital are held out to subscribers in the hope of immense gain ; but, as I have pointed out, our prosperity must of necessity largely depend upon a greater quantity of production and increased individual effort.

The happiness and prosperity of the people of this Dominion can best be secured by furthering that spirit of self-reliance, industry, and thrift which has been characteristic of our people, who, notwithstanding any differences of opinion that may exist, are proud of their British citizenship, and are prepared to do their duty at all times in maintaining and supporting the principles of justice and freedom upon which it is based.