

1890.

NEW ZEALAND.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

(In Committee of Supply, 25th June, 1890)

BY THE COLONIAL TREASURER, THE HONOURABLE SIR H. A. ATKINSON.

MR. HAMLIN,—

The Committee will be pleased to learn that my anticipation last session, of ending the financial year with a small surplus, has been more than realised. And I am sure that this feeling of gratification will be increased when I have shown, as I propose to do before I sit down, that this surplus has arisen no less from the steady improvement in the condition of the colony than from the large economies and careful administration which the present Parliament inaugurated and has always insisted upon, and which the Government has, to the best of its ability, carried out. As signs of real and very satisfactory progress, I may note particularly, on the one hand, that our Crown lands are being rapidly taken up for settlement in small areas, so that our agricultural holdings are increasing at as rapid a rate as they have at any time during our greatest prosperity; while, on the other hand, there has been an increase in the productiveness of most of our main industries, which has been very marked even in the short space of the year just closed. It is evident that, with continued prudence, our financial difficulties are now well under control; that if our burden, in proportion to our numbers, may seem great, our strength and resources are far greater still, and capable of indefinite increase. And although we must not in any way relax the care and vigilance with which we have watched our expenditure for the last three years, and have striven to extend settlement and promote industry, yet we have reason to feel sure that prosperous times have again dawned upon us, and that, humanly speaking, it rests with ourselves to make this prosperity permanent. And indeed this dawn of prosperity would now be seen to expand into broad daylight if we would only look fairly at the bright side of things, and dwell as much upon the blessings and advantages which we have in this grand country as upon the temporary difficulties and troubles which beset us from time to time, and upon which some are too fond of dwelling. It is no doubt a plain duty to keep the latter in view so far as is needed to insure their removal; but it is suicidal to ignore the countervailing facts, the great and manifold advantages we enjoy. I am induced to make these remarks because, during the last few months, I have been much impressed, in talking to travellers both from Australia and England, with the extraordinarily false impression which has been created in those countries as to our condition. This was shown by the unfeigned astonishment of the gentlemen with whom I spoke at finding us not, as they had expected, out at elbows in every sense, but in possession of every comfort and convenience of modern life, and at seeing that this comfort and plenty were shared in by all classes. They found the people well educated, well fed, well clothed and housed, working, by long-established custom, an eight hours' day (which workmen in older countries are striving to attain by law), and ready and able to enjoy very frequent holidays. That we, as a colony, have been

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Financial difficulties now well under control.