



THE NEW ZEALAND GAZETTE EXTRAORDINARY

Published by Authority

WELLINGTON: THURSDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 1987

THE First Session of the 42nd Parliament of New Zealand was this day opened by The Governor-General, when His Excellency was pleased to make the following statement of the causes of the calling of this session of Parliament together.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, it is a privilege for me to exercise for the first time the prerogative of Her Majesty the Queen in opening this First Session of the 42nd Parliament.

Haere mai nga manuhiri tuarangi
Haere mai nga iwi, nga waka
Haere mai ki te karanga o te ra

Tena koutou nga rangatira o te motu
O nga whenua
O nga moutere o te moana-nui-a-kiwa

E mihi ana ki te nui i haere mai
Ki te tautoko
Ki te awhina
I tenei kaupapa

No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou.

It is nearly two years since my wife and I entered Government House. During that time we have travelled extensively throughout the country. It is not the task of the Governor-General to tell people what to do. Rather, I try to support them in what they have already decided to do.

But every age has its challenges. As a nation we are at a pivotal point which requires all of us to face the social, economic and cultural issues of our time. These issues must be resolved lest we hand on confusion to the next generation.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS, the Government is committed to a radical and lasting improvement in the performance of the New Zealand economy.

Fundamental changes were initiated in the last three years to begin the process of reducing inflation, containing Government debt, creating permanent jobs, providing more efficient Government services, and building a fairer tax system.

The Government intends to strengthen and extend the work already done to achieve those goals. In doing so, the Government commits itself to a fairer and more equitable society.

From a better domestic economic base the Government will pursue improved market access for New Zealand goods and services both on a bilateral basis and in the new round of multilateral trade negotiations. The 1988 review of the Closer Economic Relationship with Australia and the renegotiation of our butter access to Britain are crucial issues for our future trade and will be given special priority. The Government will continue to give emphasis to the development of our primary industries which earn more than 60 percent of our export income.

The reform of industry assistance will continue with the steady removal of import licensing and the establishment of a revised tariff structure to provide the best climate for the development of manufacturing and processing industries.

Apart from changes affecting the distribution of petroleum, the Government has completed the major legislative reforms it had planned for the regulation of commerce. Subject to the satisfactory resolution of some outstanding issues a Petroleum Sector Reform Bill will be introduced.

The establishment of the new state-owned enterprises had already demonstrated that substantial productivity gains can be achieved. The Government intends to continue the process, including the transfer of equity in some of the enterprises to the public. This will result in a better use of productive resources and reduce the public sector debt burden.

This process of adjustment in the economy must not place unfair pressures on low-paid workers and other disadvantaged people. A comprehensive redundancy and retraining policy will be developed after consultation with the unions and employers. The review of equal pay issues begun in 1986 will be continued so that discrimination in employment based on sex will be removed. The Government believes in equal rights for all.

The Government remains committed to trade union education and the growth of industrial democracy. This growth will be assisted by the increased effectiveness and freedom of unions and employer organisations under the Labour Relations Act 1987. There will also be greater accountability of unions to their members. Policies will be introduced to encourage workers and their elected workplace representatives to participate in industry and business decisions.

The Government will review and amend the State Services Act 1962, the State Services Conditions of Employment Act 1977, and the Higher Salaries Commission Act 1977. The object is to effect fundamental reforms in the procedures for setting the conditions of employment for all Public Service staff, including permanent heads, aimed at creating a more responsive and flexible Public Service. The Government will examine departmental and public resources to create structures that serve New Zealand's needs.

Changes to the Accident Compensation Act 1982 to create a more efficient no fault regime will be introduced as a matter of urgency following the findings of the Law Commission review.

A basic goal of economic policy is to create a situation where every New Zealander able and willing to work has that opportunity. Work has both an economic and social role; people are a nation's most valuable resource. Work provides the individual with self-worth and the means to achieve a good quality of life.

An adequate level of basic education and skills is essential together with the ability to learn, and to adapt to change. The opportunity to acquire additional knowledge and skills throughout working life is vital. The association of the Education and Employment portfolios is a deliberate step in achieving this.

The vocational education and training system will be overhauled to fulfil the aspirations of individuals and to provide the skills the economy needs. This reformed system of which the Access programme is an integral part, must be responsive to the needs of both individuals and industry. It must also give everyone an equal chance to learn skills. Legislation to implement these reforms will be introduced this Session.

The Government has already begun a programme of training technologists. This programme is being extended, to bring in more women and more Maoris and Pacific Islanders—the groups who are not getting equal opportunity at the moment through shortcomings in the science teaching that reaches them. A positive discrimination programme is underway. More funds will be put into this work for the future.

Training is a key element of a comprehensive labour market policy. However it will not by itself enable all those who want to work to have that opportunity. To ensure that people can achieve their full potential, assistance will be required for other elements such as job search and the identification of new employment opportunities. The Government will be making a careful study of the needs of those who have difficulty in obtaining work to ensure that its labour market policies will not cause adverse effects elsewhere in the economy.

A number of reviews of education have been undertaken over the last twelve months. They include the curriculum review, the learning and achieving report on senior secondary schools, the review of special education, the report on the quality of teaching and the report on the management, funding, and organisation of continuing education and training.

The Government's on-going evaluation of the quality of education and its rigorous assessment of performance in education will allow education to make its proper contribution to our economic and social development.

The Government is fully committed to achieving a more just and compassionate society. The reports of the two Task Forces on Social Welfare Services and Income Maintenance are being considered. It is expected that decisions will be announced on those reports in the near future.

The Government intends to meet more adequately the needs of the Maori community. It is committed to the implementation of "Puaote-Atatu", the Maori Perspectives Advisory Committee's report to the Minister of Social Welfare, which identified a number of major concerns and directions for change.

The Government will be considering proposals for changes to health benefits taking into account the recommendations of the 1986 Review of Health Benefits, along with such recommendations as may be made by the Royal Commission on Social Policy and the Hospital and Related Services Task Force. Legislation will be introduced into the House to give effect to changes as necessary.

The Mental Health Act 1969 will be reviewed and legislation will be introduced shortly in order to achieve a better balance between issues of civil liberties and treatment requirements.

An important aspect of social and economic policy is the achievement of equity for women and the encouragement of self-reliance and independence. Priority will be given to improved access to childcare, employment, housing and health care.

The Royal Commission on Social Policy is addressing the wider issues in the area of social policy. Its recommendations are expected to have far reaching implications.

In recognition of the growing sophistication of Arts and Culture the Government will establish a new Ministry devoted to encouraging this important dimension of our national identity. New Zealand has a unique role to play in cultural inter-action.

During this Session the Government intends to address the issue of Maori land claims and you will be asked to consider a Maori Land Bill.

Acknowledging the contribution that the Pacific Island communities have made to New Zealand's economic and cultural development the Government will continue its support of employment and development schemes for Pacific Islanders.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS, the work of the last three years to reform and strengthen local and regional government will continue. You will be asked to consider a Rating Powers Bill which will consolidate into one Act the rating powers of all local authorities.

A comprehensive review of the Town and Country Planning Act 1977 has been released for public comment. It is intended to introduce legislation more in keeping with community aspirations. A Bill will also be introduced to establish new environmental assessment procedures. The Government is also conducting a comprehensive review of the Land Act 1948 and will introduce a new Bill.

In keeping with a proper balance between the protection of the environment and the exploration of mineral resources the Government is committed to the reform of the mining legislation. However it must ensure the best use of mineral resources and the efficient allocation of mining rights to provide an effective contribution to our economy.

The nation's ports are crucial to our trade and economic well-being. New Zealand ports are inefficient, poorly managed, over capitalised and plagued by poor industrial practices. The Government is determined to reform the port industry. As part of the reform process a Bill will be introduced requiring harbour boards to establish companies to manage the commercial aspects of their port operations. The Waterfront Industry Act 1976 will be amended in tandem with the ports legislation, to remove the cross-subsidisation of labour costs among ports and the monopoly of the harbour boards in providing cargo-handling equipment.

The high toll of death and injury on New Zealand's roads continues to cause concern. You will be asked to consider amendments to existing legislation recommended by the Select Committee on Communications and Road Safety as a result of its inquiry into drunk driving.

In the Justice area, a Crimes Bill and a Sale of Liquor Bill will be introduced. There will also be legislation to revise the legal aid statutes and to improve access to the law for everyone.

The Chattels Transfer Act 1924 as it affects motor vehicles will be replaced by new provisions offering much greater protection for those who deal with motor vehicles subject to encumbrances.

Reviews of consumer law will be matched with information and education programmes to ensure that people know their rights and can secure a fair deal for themselves.

Strategies will be devised to ensure that the public has a greater understanding of the criminal justice system and what it can realistically be expected to achieve.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS, the Government takes a comprehensive view of New Zealand's security. The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty and our non-nuclear legislation are elements in a policy of limiting the threat posed by nuclear weapons. The Government has taken a further initiative by appointing the first ever Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control. The new Domestic and External Security Committee of Cabinet will also co-ordinate planning.

The security of the South Pacific region will remain the principal consideration in the Government's defence policy. Recent events underline the importance of preserving stability in the region. Elsewhere the conduct of New Zealand's external relations will call for a continuing review of priorities. Changes will not lead to neglect of any of the friendships we value.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, Parliament has been summoned for what will be a full and demanding session. I commend all these matters to your careful consideration, and I pray that Divine Guidance will attend all your deliberations.