

Enclosure 1, in No. 2.

End. 1, in No. 1.

SPEECH of his Excellency the Governor, on Opening the Second Session of the Fifth General Assembly, Tuesday, 31 January 1854.

Mr. President, and Gentlemen of Her Majesty's Council;
Mr. Speaker, and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly;

THE duty of addressing you on your again meeting for the despatch of public business devolves upon me under circumstances which, while they demand our hearty acknowledgments to Almighty God for mercies bestowed and calamities averted, are not without alloy. While other countries have been sorely visited, we have mercifully enjoyed health and tranquillity; on the other hand, a renewed visitation, with unmitigated severity, of the potato disease in all parts of the island, and the failure of the fishery in many localities, have been followed by great distress among a large portion of our labouring population.

In closing the last Session of the Legislature, I expressed the hope that it would not be necessary for me, on our re-assembling, to make a further appeal to your liberality on behalf of the labouring population; but the great and continued prevalence of distress arising from the causes to which I have adverted, aggravated moreover, by the failure of the Electric Telegraph Company, rendered absolutely necessary the advance of a large amount in excess of the grant for the relief of the poor. I shall cause to be laid before you the details of this extra expenditure; and I rely upon your indemnifying me for an outlay, under all the circumstances of it, so unavoidable.

I am glad to be enabled to inform you that the revenue has exceeded the estimate made of its probable amount.

I shall direct to be laid before you copies of despatches on several matters which formed the subject of addresses passed during the last Session. From one of them you will learn that Her Majesty's Government decline to guarantee the repayment of the loan of 50,000 £. requested by you for the construction of main lines of road.

I have the satisfaction of being able to inform you, in reply to your address on the subject, that Her Majesty's Government will carefully maintain our rights of fishery, consistently with a faithful observance of the treaties with foreign powers.

To every country is assigned by Providence its peculiar productions, which may be interchanged among men for their mutual benefit. Although the climate of this colony is such that no available product is raised from the soil for export, yet we are more than compensated by the advantageous position of our shores for the prosecution of a valuable fishery. From the reports which I shall transmit to you, you will perceive that the object of the grant of the last Session, for the protection of the fisheries from external interruption, has been carried out with energy, and, to the extent of the means afforded, with success. Upon the prosperity of our fisheries the general welfare entirely depends; and it cannot, therefore, be superfluous to urge upon you the essential importance of guarding them not only against encroachment from without, but against the no less serious detriment to them resulting from the sale of bait by our own people on the southern coasts, to our great rivals. I commend, therefore, to your consideration the adoption of such legislative enactments, within the legitimate scope of the functions of the local Legislature, as will check, or greatly restrict this mischievous traffic. To enforce the provisions of the law in this respect, as well as to protect our river salmon fisheries on the west coast, I recommend you to place at the disposal of the Executive, adequate means for the maintenance of an efficient coast guard during the ensuing fishery season. A naval officer will be detached to the west coast for this last mentioned service by the Vice-Admiral commanding on the station, who has invited the co-operation of this Government.

In connexion with the subject of the fisheries, I would further submit for your consideration the expediency of reviving, in whole or in part, the Act for the inspection of pickled fish which has recently expired.

Mr. Speaker, and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly;

The financial statements and estimate for the ensuing year shall be laid before you without delay.

In consequence of the omission to provide means for defraying the expenditure contemplated by the Road Act of last Session, and owing to the unavoidable necessity of exceeding the appropriation for the relief of the necessitous, the revenue has been quite inadequate to cover the total expenditure of the year. To supply the deficiency, it will be necessary, during the present Session, to authorise the raising of a further sum by loan on the credit of the colony; whereby a considerable addition must be made to the already large public debt.

I deem the present opportunity, therefore, a fitting one for calling your earnest attention to the financial condition of the colony, and to its large and increasing debt. To reduce this debt in accordance with subsisting engagements, and to maintain the public credit in a sound and healthy condition, I need hardly point out to you the imperative necessity for discontinuing, or greatly curtailing, the casual and extraordinary appropriations for services not included in the estimates. Several of these services, as well as some of those heretofore included