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## STATEMENT ON MARINE MATTERS.

BY THE COMMISSIONER OF CUSTOMS, THE HONORABLE WILLIAM HUNTER REYNOLDS.

MR SPEAKER,—

Last Session I was frequently applied to in the House for information regarding the Marine Department, and you will remember, Sir, that before the Session closed I stated what progress had been made in the works undertaken by the department during the recess, and also the views of the Government as to what further action should be taken during the then current year. Anticipating the wish of the House for further information, I now propose to show what has been done during the past year, and what is proposed for the present.

*Lighthouses.*—Shortly after the termination of last Session, officers of the Marine Department were despatched to visit The Brothers, in Cook Strait, with a view to ascertain whether it would be advisable to erect a lighthouse on one of these islets, instead of at the entrance to Tory Channel, and afterwards to visit the sites of the proposed lighthouses in the Middle Island. From the reports received, and which I have just laid on the Table, it was decided to erect a lighthouse at The Brothers instead of at Tory Channel. The apparatus which had been ordered for Tory Channel, and which is now in the colony, will consequently not be required for that place, and is unsuitable for The Brothers, but will be available for Hokitika, where it is proposed to erect it. In connection with Tory Channel, I may also state that last month Captain Johnson, of this department, was sent to select sites for the erection of leading lights to guide vessels into that channel; and as soon as the temporary beacons have been proved to be in their proper positions, it is proposed to provide the lights. Having obtained all the requisite information as to the sites and class of lights required, an order was sent to England in February last for the necessary apparatus for lights to be erected on The Brothers, in Cook Strait; at Puysegur Point and Centre Island, in Foveaux Strait; at Moko Hinou Island, in Hauraki Gulf; at Cape Maria Van Diemen, at the extreme north of the North Island; and at Portland Island, off the Mahia Peninsula.

Advices have been received from the engineers in Great Britain that the contracts for the lanterns and apparatus have been let, and no time will be lost in erecting the necessary buildings, so that they may be ready, or nearly so, to receive the lights when they arrive in the colony.

A road party has been for some time at work forming a road from Puysegur Point to Otago Retreat, at the entrance to Preservation Inlet, the nearest convenient harbour, and a road has also been formed to the site of Cape Foulwind Lighthouse. The materials for this lighthouse are partly in the colony, and the remainder on the way from England; and preparation is being made for erection of the tower and dwellings. The Government propose ordering at an early date lights for the following places:—Moeraki, Cape Saunders, Akaroa Heads, and a site yet to be fixed near the eastern entrance to Hauraki Gulf. Your concurrence will be asked to these proposals when the estimates are under consideration, as also to provide for the erection of leading lights for Tory Channel, and for the

removal of Mana Island light to Cape Egmont. The latter will have to await the completion of the light on The Brothers, and the acquiring of a suitable site; but the land being Native property requires further action to be taken by my colleague the Native Minister.

As even with the present number of lighthouses considerable inconvenience has been caused at times through the services of the "Luna" not being available for the use of the Marine Department, and as both during and after the erection of the proposed lighthouses it will be absolutely necessary to have a steamer for the sole use of the Marine Department, an order has been sent to England for a steamer suitable for use as a lighthouse tender, and also for lifting buoys and moorings.

In connection with the claims of the shipping community for the erection of additional lighthouses, I may point out that the light dues for the past financial year amounted to £10,241 19s. 6d., whilst the cost of maintaining the lights only amounted to £5,767 4s. 9d., thus showing a profit of £4,474 14s. 9d. The profit during the previous financial year was £3,989 1s. 9d. From the 1st of July, 1866, to the 30th June last, the revenue derivable from light dues has exceeded the working expenditure by £18,847 13s. 6d. The returns of trade and shipping, and the tables attached to the Marine Report, now laid on the Table of the House, show the largely increasing trade of the colony; and whilst we are entitled to congratulate ourselves on such an increase, I think that it will be admitted that I am justified, on behalf of the shipping interest, in asking you to provide liberally for the further erection of lighthouses. The Government do not propose to reduce the dues, but rather to use any surplus, from time to time, towards increasing the number of lighthouses along the coast.

*Training Schools.*—The Naval Training Schools Act, which was passed last Session, has enabled the Government to establish a school at Kohimarama, near Auckland, in very suitable buildings belonging to the Melanesian Trust, together with the schooner "Southern Cross," as a training ship. I proceeded to Auckland last September with this object in view, and while there I was fortunate enough to secure the services of Lieut. Tilly, R.N., who has devoted a great deal of his time to the starting of the institution, and has rendered me most valuable assistance. Mainly through his instrumentality I secured the services of Lieut. Breton, R.N., to take charge of the institution. In April last I again paid a flying visit to Auckland, and was highly gratified to find that the selection of Captain Breton had been a most fortunate one. He has his heart in the work, and I have no doubt that the institution will prove a great success under his management. I found the boys well disciplined, happy, and proud of their occupation. They also showed considerable proficiency in working the "Southern Cross" during our short trip, doing everything themselves, even to steering the vessel; I found them also well trained in pulling in boats; while their nautical training had been attended to they had not been neglected in other respects; they were receiving a liberal education, and were also being taught the art of swimming. It is now generally admitted in the United Kingdom that, in order to secure a sufficient supply of seamen for the mercantile marine, the Government must give every encouragement to the maintenance of training ships and their tenders; and, situated as we are, being also dependent on the sea as our great highway, we cannot do better than follow the example of the mother country.

*Storm Signals and Weather Reporting.*—Some fifteen months ago the Government initiated a new branch of the Marine Department, for the purpose of obtaining reliable reports as to the state of weather in the various parts of the colony, in order that, from examination of these observations, which are forwarded by telegraph to a central office, forecasts of the weather may be made, and, by a system of storm signals, masters of vessels may be prepared for approaching bad weather. This work has been confided to Commander Edwin, R.N., who, I am glad to say, has shown a great amount of skill, zeal, and energy in carrying out my wishes to secure this boon to the colony. Arrangements have been made by which Captain Johnson, in addition to his other duties in the Marine Department, is associated with Captain Edwin in this branch of the service, so as to insure that

in the event of Captain Edwin being unable at any time, either from sickness or other causes, to attend to this duty, the system will be carried on without risk of stoppage.

From official reports which have been received and are now laid before you, as well as from private sources, I am given to understand that the weather forecasts given from the central office have been generally very correct; that the information thus given has been highly appreciated at most of the shipping ports of the colony, and has been the means of preventing loss and damage to many vessels. Honorable members must, however, bear in mind that such a scheme cannot be perfected in a day or a year; it is only very lately that Captain Edwin has been able to give anything like reliable information; every day now will enable him to acquire further data on which to base his forecasts.

In order that the necessary observations might be carried out with greater accuracy, a supply of superior meteorological instruments has been lately ordered from England; and it is hoped that the system will be in a most efficient state before our next meeting.

With the certainty of this colony becoming a great maritime country, I look upon this and other kindred undertakings as second to no other interests. Lighting our coasts, training our seamen, and forecasting the weather must of necessity largely occupy the attention of any Government for all time coming, and I have no doubt that these subjects will receive from the Legislature that consideration which they so well deserve.

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