

SESS. II.—1897.
NEW ZEALAND.

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO APPOINTMENTS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

(MEMORANDA RESPECTING THE LAST THREE APPOINTMENTS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

(No. 49.)

MEMORANDUM for His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

Premier's Office, Wellington, 23rd January, 1897.

THE Premier presents his compliments, and begs to acquaint His Excellency that his Responsible Advisers deem it necessary to maintain the efficiency of the Legislative Council by the appointment of three additional members thereto. His Excellency will doubtless recollect that, prior to his departure for the Sounds, the Premier had an interview with him, and intimated verbally the necessity there was for increasing the number of Councillors, and stated that on his return to Wellington he would submit to His Excellency a memorandum on the subject, which he has now the honour to do.

Since the date of the advice tendered for the appointment of the last four members to the Council four vacancies have occurred, three by death and one by resignation: Hon. Mr. Mantell, Hon. Mr. Pharazyn, Hon. Dr. Pollen, and Hon. Sir P. A. Buckley respectively. But, in addition to this, it must be borne in mind that there are several members of the Council who, owing to advanced age and infirmities, are unable to attend to their duties: one in particular was only able to be present at one meeting of the Council last session, and his infirmities are of such a nature that it is very improbable he will ever again be able to resume his duties. There is also another member who is in the same state, and who was only able to attend a very few meetings last session. Several others also suffer from ill-health and are unable to be present, thus weakening the Chamber both in respect to speaking- and voting-power. The Premier may also mention that three other members were absent visiting the Mother-country; another member was only able to attend for a couple of weeks; and, from the outlook, there is every likelihood of the same occurring in the coming session. The attendance was intermittent and insufficient, and, with the increasing age of the members of the Council, the same thing is bound to continue. Nominally there are 45 members of the Council, but a reference to the division-lists—a copy of which is enclosed herewith—discloses the fact that the average attendance was only 28.5, and out of 61 divisions it was only on 19 occasions that the attendance exceeded 30.

The Premier would point out that in recommending the slight increase of three members it will not materially alter the position of parties.

His Excellency will notice by the return enclosed that the policy Bills rejected by the Council were—the Alcoholic Liquors, on which the voting was 10 for and 18 against—majority, 8; the Contagious Diseases (first Bill), the voting on which was 11 for and 20 against—majority, 9. On this Bill being sent up a second time the voting was 11 for and 18 against—majority, 7; the Eight Hours Bill, the voting on which was 13 for and 15 against—majority, 2; the Private Benefit Societies Bill, the voting on which was 11 for and 18 against—majority, 7; and the Usury Prevention, the voting on which was 10 for and 14 against—majority, 4: so that practically there was five of a majority against these Bills.

Since the prorogation of Parliament a general election has taken place, and the opinion of the people has been expressed on several of the measures which were rejected by the Legislative Council in the last Parliament; and the result of the elections has further proved that the policy of His Excellency's Advisers has the approval of the people, and that they possess the confidence of the electors of the colony.

The Premier, in tendering this advice, is not unmindful of the fact that His Excellency will shortly be leaving the colony, and deems it advisable that the matter should be dealt with by His Excellency in preference to leaving it to his successor, who, if this was done, would immediately on arrival be called upon to deal with the matter without being, as His Excellency is, well acquainted with the whole question. Parliament will meet at the beginning of June, and from what appears in public print the appointment of His Excellency's successor will not be made until that month. It