



LEFT: Laying the foundation-stone of the Houses of Assembly at Wellington in 1857—from an engraving in the "Illustrated London News" of the time

Governor) wrote to Queen Victoria a clear-sighted view of the turn that politics were likely to take.

The government of John Ballance had a positive programme of reform which it was determined to implement. At this juncture the Legislative Council rejected bill after bill sent up from the lower House. Even after the Secretary of State had given his decision for the Ministry and the electorate had again given the Government its approval the obstruction was prolonged. Its effect was actually to strengthen the hands of the Liberal Government. The economic uplift and the enhanced reputation of New Zealand abroad, especially after the Colonial Conference of 1897, enabled Seddon smoothly to evade the question of federating with Australia, and instead to lead the new spirit of nationalism into a channel near to his own heart—closer relations with the "good old Motherland," active and equal partnership in Imperial affairs. Thereafter, irrespective of the swing of the political pendulum, each step taken by New Zealand in external events was approved by Parliament—the South African War, the protests about Chinese labour in South Africa and the transfer of Samoa, the New Hebrides Convention, the gift of H.M.S. New Zealand and our participation in two world wars.

Three Major Phases

Since the widening of the franchise in 1893, there have been three major phases—Liberalism, 1890-1912; Reform and Nationalism, 1913-25; and then, after a period of flux with a third party growing, the Labour regime, 1935-49. Each swing was associated with one of the overseas wars, the short term effect

of which was generally in favour of the Government of the day and the long term effect tending towards the British Commonwealth of Nations.

In 1933, after 40 years of female franchise, the first woman appeared in the House. Since 1936 the speeches of Parliament have been broadcast. In 1947 New Zealand adopted the Statute of Westminster. In January, 1954, Parliament was opened by Her Majesty the Queen.

Though the party system has tended to restrict the opportunity for private members to enjoy initiate legislation, it is still possible in theory. Its most noteworthy instance was Sir Thomas Sidey's Summer Time Bill, passed in 1926. Each year from 1909 it was defeated, both Houses for many years refusing to regard it seriously.

Parliament has built up a puzzling array of privileges to preserve its independence. In the first week its independence was gravely offended from a military quarter. Dr. Bacot, M.G.A. for the Pensioner settlements, was absent for some days without leave. His superior officer in the Fencibles, who was a member of the Upper House, had refused him permission to attend to his parliamentary duties. The opinion was held that no duty could override a summons to Parliament. Military duty has taken a toll of members all through. W. C. King, a Taranaki member, was killed by hostile Maoris in 1861. In 1864 Colonel M. Nixon was killed at Rangiaohia. In the First World War W. H. D. Bell, who withdrew from the House to serve abroad, was killed in France, where several other members served in the N.Z.E.F. In the Second World War five legislators were killed: W. J. Lyon,

A. N. Grigg, J. M. Allen, A. Hultquist and J. Hargest.

Parliament's dignity was assailed in an interesting manner in 1887, when George Jones, a journalist, accused the Attorney-General (Whitaker) of using his position to promote his own financial interests. Before the House, Jones declined to withdraw his statements, which he still believed were true. Parliament did not know how to punish such defiance, and on Whitaker's motion instructed the Attorney-General to prosecute him in the courts. This State trial, which was held in Dunedin, cost the country £2300, and ended in the acquittal of Jones, who was elected M.H.R. for Waitaki a year later, and served 25 years in the Council.

The building which was erected in 1857 was destroyed by fire on December 11, 1907. The library in its new Gothic home was for a while in danger, and books were actually being evacuated across Hill Street. The new building was commenced in 1912, and the finished part occupied in 1918.

Drama from the House

SOME of the most dramatic moments in our parliamentary history, with their venomous personal feuds and often brilliant oratory, are recreated in the programme *A Hundred Years of Parliament*, which will be broadcast in a link of the YA stations at 8.0 p.m. on Monday, May 24. The programme was written by Basil Clarke, who has drawn upon such material as the private diaries of Henry Sewell (New Zealand's first

Prime Minister), newspaper reports and other historical records of the times, and above all, the official volumes of Hansard over the past 100 years.

The story of Parliament comes sharply to life in the programme, beginning with the notorious first session in Auckland which ended in a wild brawl on the floor of the House. Listeners will be able to hear such incidents as James Edward Fitzgerald's celebrated speech of loyalty to Britain at the outbreak of the Crimean War, which foreshadowed by nearly a hundred years the struggle for power between Russia and the United States. They will hear George Maurice O'Rorke cross the floor of the House to save himself being "branded as a base political traitor," to use his own words, when it became clear to him that Sir Julius Vogel's policy would inevitably bring

about the abolition of the provincial assemblies. They will hear William Massey's famous appeal for "deeds, not words," at the outbreak of the First World War, and the equally historic broadcast of M. J. Savage on September 3, 1939.

Much of the programme is devoted to the first session of Parliament in 1854, which was probably the stormiest in its history. The New Zealanders' intense desire for complete freedom and independence brought about almost immediately a bitter wrangle with the Acting-Governor, Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. Wynyard, and led to the smirching of some reputations, notably that of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, the colony's founder. Wakefield, though the elected member for Hutt, was secretly advising the Governor behind the scenes on how to deal with the demands of the House, which Wynyard was opposing. As a result of this double-dealing Wakefield was savagely abused in Parliament by both Fitzgerald and Frederick Weld.

When Wakefield advised Wynyard to close Parliament, Fitzgerald and Sewell locked the doors to prevent members leaving, and when James Mackay, of Oamaru, declared the closure to be a fact, Sewell attacked him with his umbrella. The resulting melee, with fists flying like a regular donnybrook, was "an inglorious end to a great beginning," and led the newspaper *The New Zealander* to report gloomily: "It is painful to say the word, but the session has been a failure. More!—it has been suicidal! One Bill, and one Bill only, was passed, and that was a Bill to authorise the sale of spirituous liquors on the premises for the use of honourable members." Yet as the programme points out, this session was by no means wasted. The whole pattern of our future development was foreshadowed in those first few days of struggle.