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A D D R E S S
OF
HIS HONOR THE SUPERINTENDENT
ON OPENING THE FORTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE PROVINCIAL
COUNCIL OF CANTERBURY.

MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN,

In accordance with what I believed would be your wish, I have taken the earliest opportunity, after the termination of the recent elections, to summon the Council of the Province for the dispatch of business.

The late Council expressed their desire that in future the financial period should terminate in the autumn instead of in the spring of the year, and I believe that by this arrangement the public advantage will be best consulted, having in view the convenience of those who are members of both the Colonial and Provincial Legislatures, and the uncertainty which exists as to the time when the General Assembly of the Colony may conclude its deliberations; and, also, considering that at this time of the year private business will be less interfered with than at any other by your attendance on your public duties.

I shall, accordingly, ask you to grant supplies for the public service for the period ending the 31st of March, 1875.

It is our privilege to meet under circumstances of peculiar prosperity.

Since the first meeting of the last Council, not quite four years ago, the population of the Province has increased from about 45,000 to more than 59,000.

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The area of cultivation has been nearly doubled in the same period, and the value of the exports of the Province has reached a sum during the past year of more than one million sterling.

The great increase in the value of our exports, combined with the influx of population and capital, have had a most marked effect upon the sales of waste lands, which have greatly exceeded the amount anticipated. The receipts under this head were estimated for the year ending September 30, 1871, at £34,875, and the actual receipts for that year were £36,225 15s. 6d. The estimated receipts for the year to end 30th September, 1874, were £262,800, but the amount actually obtained to the 27th of this month, that is, in a period of eight months, is £453,308 2s. 9d., or £190,508 2s. 9d. in excess of the sum estimated for the whole year; and during this period more than 117,671 acres have been surveyed.

The large increase of traffic on the railways is another evidence of the prosperity of the Province. The total receipts for the year ending 30th September last, amounted to £75,674 19s. 11d., while the receipts for the seven months ending 30th April last, are £61,747 4s. 3d.

As the traffic returns show a considerable amount of income in excess of expenditure, I have thought it expedient to reduce the rates of carriage and fares on the different lines, a course which I confidently anticipate will induce traffic, and promote the public convenience.

This reduction will take effect in a few days.

The lines of railway from Rakaia to Ashburton, from Rolleston to Malvern, and from Rangiora to Cust, will be open for traffic shortly; and the branch line to Southbridge will probably be open in a few months.

You will learn from returns which will be laid before you, that every effort is being made to promote the diffusion and settlement of the large numbers of immigrants who are arriving in the Province.

Depôts are being established at Waimate, Akaroa, Rangiora, Ashburton, and Oxford. In accordance with the resolution of the last Council, cottages have been erected, or are in course of erection, for the reception of immigrants in various districts of the Province. It is of such importance that the immigrants forwarded to this province should be of a character suited to its requirements, that I trust you will see fit to continue, in England, the services of an agent, having accurate local knowledge of the wants and resources of this portion of the colony.

I regard with considerable satisfaction the fact that the working classes in England are taking practical steps to make themselves acquainted with the field which is here open to industry, and have no doubt that a better knowledge of the advantages which are offered will lead to a considerable influx of population. As a matter of primary importance, you will be asked to make liberal appropriations to the Road Boards, especially in those districts where lines of road are not already formed.

From information which has been received, I learn that an engineer may shortly be expected from England to report upon the construction of harbour works at Timaru. I shall recommend you to set aside a liberal sum to give effect to any proposals which may be made by him.

I shall shortly be in a position to call for tenders for a portion of the work authorised by you to provide a water supply on the Waimakariri Plains. I shall ask you to make a further appropriation for the same purpose in the district between the Rivers Ashburton and Rakaia.

The time has, I think, come when active steps should be taken to ascertain the cost of permanently lowering Lake Ellesmere, so that a large tract of land may be made available for cultivation, and with this object in view, I shall ask you to appropriate a sufficient sum to obtain an opinion from a competent engineer as to the best method to be adopted, and as to the expense which may be involved, together with an estimate of the amount of land which would be rendered available.

The system of education established in this province is producing most important results.

The number of children attending the public schools is steadily increasing.

The actual numbers in attendance for the quarter ending 31st December last, according to the published returns, being 8229, as against 6265 in the same quarter of the previous year.

New districts are being formed, and new school buildings are being erected.

In order to meet the increasing educational requirements of the Province, and to maintain the system in a state of efficiency, and also to prevent the necessity for increased taxation in the future, I am of opinion that further endowments in land are desirable. The question of the expediency of extending similar provision to hospitals and other institutions deserves your careful attention.

I shall recommend you to make further grants to public libraries, so as to extend the usefulness of these institutions.

I am of opinion that it would be advisable to permanently endow the municipalities of the Province with certain fees, and taxes, raised within their respective boundaries. I propose therefore to transmit to you a Bill to give effect to this proposition.

Bills will be submitted to you for amending "The Executive Council Ordinance," for amending "The Railway Tolls and Management Ordinance, 1872," for granting to the Municipal Corporations within the Province certain fees and taxes, as part of their ordinary revenue.

I now declare this Council open for the despatch of business.

WM. ROLLESTON,
Superintendent.

CHRISTCHURCH:

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