


NEW ZEALAND  
GOVERNMENT GAZETTE  
(PROVINCE OF NELSON).

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By His Honor's command,

J. C. RICHMOND, Provincial Secretary.

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No. 13.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 1864.

THE Twelfth Session of the Provincial Council was opened this day, at Two o'clock, upon which his Honor the Superintendent delivered the following Speech:—

MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL—

1. In reviewing the past twelve months, and endeavoring to anticipate the coming portion of the current year so far as may be necessary to make estimates and devise plans, there appears to me, more than ever, occasion to notice around us, and particularly within our own Province, the fluctuations of trade and population that attend gold seeking.

At the opening of your last ordinary Session, I built no calculations on the hopes created by the influx of diggers during the autumn preceding, and there was no chance therefore of our being involved in difficulties by the partial way in which those hopes have been fulfilled. Business, during part of the past year, has been to some extent depressed, and a large portion of the trading public shared in the depression. New discoveries have changed the tone of things, and, taking the year throughout, we have reason to call it one of fair prosperity.

2. The development of our gold-fields during the past year, has not indeed equalled the common expectation, but the movement of diggers towards the

south-western districts, and the efforts made by the Government to keep pace with it, have not been fruitless. The Valley of the Buller is no longer a land known only to a few explorers. It is open to all, and many are now able to judge from their own observation of its capabilities and resources.

On former occasions I have brought under your notice the names of those who have conferred benefit on the public as explorers in various parts of the province, and I now refer with pleasure to our chief surveyor, Mr. Brunner, our first explorer of the western and south-western parts of the Province, whose topographical notes (made many years ago under difficulties which it requires an effort of mind to appreciate, now that they are removed), bear wonderfully well the test of closer examination which, since the opening of the country, can easily be applied to them. Eighteen years ago he gave a year and half of his time to exploring this part of the Province, living almost entirely on the indigenous productions of the country. It is only now that tracks have been made through the parts he travelled, that his labour and persevering energy can be fully understood and appreciated. A portion of his journal was published by order of the House of Commons, in the year 1850, and his services were, I believe, acknowledged in the presentation to him of a medal, by the Royal Geographical Society of England, and it will be a great pleasure to me to unite with you in giving him some tangible evidence that his fellow settlers appreciate the services he has rendered them.

3. Side by side with the industry of the gold-fields and its sudden movements, the less rapid, but sure process of reclaiming the wilderness for cultivation,

has been going forward. Forest land is gradually taking the place which it must, in a bush-covered country, eventually occupy in public estimation. In various parts of the Province, the axe has been doing its work, particularly in the Motueka, Dovedale, Pigeon, and Takaka Valleys. These are encouraging facts which should reconcile us to the necessity of estimating the land revenue for the current year, at much less than we have had to expend of late.

4. With a reasonable confidence in the resources of the Province, we need not be eager for a torrent of population, bringing much wealth indeed, but much misery in its train, and leaving certain collapse when the flood retires. The Province from end to end, possesses gold deposits which may perhaps never prove the cause of intense excitement, like that we have just witnessed in a neighbouring Province, but which will give fair wages to steady labor for many years, and become more attractive whenever settlement shall spread into the valleys of the western and other auriferous districts.

Under circumstances like those of the gold-bearing colonies, a sudden rise of Customs revenue is not a certain symptom of sound prosperity, and our moderate advances in this respect need not be viewed with despondency. The gradual extension of permanent industry over the face of the country, and the steady growth of revenue that follows the increase of settled population, are the objects of wise hope.

Although the land revenue of last year fell short of my estimate and your expectation, the examination of the sources and particulars of this deficiency gives evidence of a healthy advance in the Province.

5. The gross Customs receipts, exclusive of gold duty, for the year ended 31st March last, amounted to £25,752 7s. 0d., of which the Provincial Treasurer has received £11,278 14s. 11d., being £1,278 14s. 11d. in excess of my estimate; and in addition to this the sum of £1,627 10s. 5d. has been received from the General Government, as surplus revenue. The gold duty for the same period amounted to £1,028 2s. 2d.

6. The land fund was estimated at £30,000, which, as about the average of nine previous years' receipts, might be supposed a reasonable conjecture. The amount actually received was, however, little more than half this estimate, being £15,127, nett, and showed a startling decrease of £44,267, or nearly seventy-five per cent. upon the receipts of the previous year—£59,394. A very little reflection will show that a land fund three-fourths of it arising in favorable years, from the large purchases of three or four wealthy flockowners, cannot be made, with any degree of certainty, the subject of calculation.

It will be seen, from the returns that will be laid before you, that the great falling short has been in these large purchases. The cash sales of large tracts in the Amuri were £53,173 0s. 0d. in 1862-3 against £5,268 0s. 0d. in 1863-4, showing a diminution of £47,905, or nine-tenths of the whole amount, and more than the total decrease of the land fund; whilst the cash sales of comparatively small lots in the agricultural and mixed districts have increased from £6,221 in 1862-3 to £10,254 last year. Thus we see that so far as land sales can be taken as an index of prosperity, the past year shows a marked advance in the amount of available capital spread among the bulk of the population, a growing confidence in the stability and resources of the Province, and real progress towards the occupation of the country.

7. My opportunities of expressing myself are not so frequent that, I could neglect this occasion to declare my own opinion that although the land fund may and must sooner or later shrink away (being, in

fact, capital and not revenue), and with it one easy means of executing public works will be taken from us, yet there is no sign nor probability of a stoppage of growth, much less of decay in the Province; and though from the physical character of the land its settlement may be slow and long deferred, there is ground for confidence that the progress of colonization will not be arrested until population has spread to every spot where industry can find its reward.

8. For the reasons that may be gathered from what I have already stated, I propose to act on a low estimate of the land revenue for the current year. My estimate of the total revenue will be £35,000 from all sources. Of this amount I propose that one half at least shall be appropriated to public works.

9. I think you will do wisely to provide for the extension and improvement of the works already constructed in the Valley of the Buller. The specific improvements I recommend to you are—First, the construction of a horse bridge across the Buller, at the junction of the Mangles. This would render both the existing tracks, north and south of the main river, available at all times for supplying the inhabitants on the Buller, and on the tributaries on both banks. Secondly, I propose the enlargement of the foot track between the Mangles junction and the Lyell, wherever that may be necessary to allow horses to pass. Thirdly, I propose to make reserves on which small bush clearings should be made at intervals along the various lines, with the primary object of forming paddocks for cattle travelling on the roads; and with the further view of giving unmistakable evidence of the character of the land in many parts of these valleys and its capabilities as pasture.

The extensions I propose are two; one up the length of the Matakita Valley for about twenty-five miles, the other a cross country line from the Tiramea Plain to the upper end of the line just named, a distance of about thirteen miles. The whole Matakita Valley would thus have the full benefit of the two tracks now in existence. The lines offer no difficulties whatever and will open no inconsiderable quantity of fair bush land and about 10,000 acres of grass country; and a further extension of twelve miles will render the Maruia Valley accessible and bring our horse roads close to the Valley of the Grey.

10. I consider it now practicable and right that we should proceed in the most careful and deliberate way with all parts of the main southern tracks, lay-out every new line and every improvement of existing lines, with a constant view to the future construction of a railway or first-class road from end to end of the Province. I am aware that many roads have been constructed piecemeal, and have grown out of the hasty line blazed by some explorer, improved from time to time as funds allowed or an emergency required. There is nothing at the present moment to urge on the main southern line, or any of the roads in the country, beyond such a rate as is consistent with providing beforehand for greater future improvement, without abandoning the works of the present day.

11. The information obtained on the coal-fields has been, from time to time, made public. A perfect boring apparatus has arrived from home, under the care of a person of much skill and experience in the use of such tools in the collieries of the North of England.

The result of the borings made at Mokihini has been to fix my attention more particularly on the coal beds nearer the Buller, and the apparatus is probably now at work on the seaward side of Mount Rochfort, putting to practical proof the opinion of

the Colliery Engineer, that coal will be found, at moderate elevation, within seven or eight miles of Westport.

The Loan Bill of last Session not having been assented to, I shall ask you to pass it again, with such modifications as are required by the General Government.

Without agreeing in the precise terms demanded by the General Government before assenting to such Bills, I am satisfied that it is reasonable that the land fund should be specifically pledged for all debts incurred in public works and colonization. The money to be raised for the coal-fields, supposing the project to be assented to, I propose should be applied in aid of any competent company which may first undertake the opening of the field, and I think that it should be paid as the permanent and general work for transporting the coal to the port progresses. If difficulty should exist in negotiating the loan in one or more sums I think that the debentures might be paid over to the proposed company, and negotiated by them from time to time, without serious difficulty or loss. Precise terms to be offered to capitalists willing to undertake the working of the coal-field will be sent down for your approval.

12. The Waterworks Loan is proposed in a Bill separate from the Coal-fields Loan, as it is possible that the same sort of security may not be required for a loan which it is proposed to meet by a special rate.

13. The Waste Land Bill embodying your resolutions of last Session has been passed, with modifications, by the General Assembly, and transmitted home for her Majesty's assent.

The leasing clauses were rejected by the Assembly, but there yet remain several valuable features in the Act; it clears up some uncertain points, and dictates a more regular course of practice; the extension of the powers to give land for public works may enable the construction of a central railway without incurring debt; and a power to lease auriferous land may prove an encouragement to steady industry in parts of our gold-fields where great prizes are hardly to be looked for.

14. The bridge across the Wai-au-ua River at the point where it leaves the Hammer Plain has been completed since your last meeting. Not only does this bridge afford great convenience to the neighborhood and remove the necessity of fording the most dangerous river in this Province upon the direct road to Canterbury, but it has a claim on attention, as I believe the first example of an economical mode of constructing bridges across streams subject to heavy

floods, and with rocky and almost inaccessible banks. My thanks are due to the Provincial Engineer (Mr. Blackett) for the bold and novel conception and details of this bridge, and to Mr. Handyside for his ingenuity and indefatigable attention in executing the work.

15. The Scab Act of last Session is in operation, and, I think, with promise of great usefulness. I believe it will need amendment hereafter; but our present experience is not enough to make me hope that it can be satisfactorily and permanently done in the present Session.

16. The influx of men from other parts of the colony, many of them in a destitute condition, will, I doubt not, engage your consideration, and induce you to hasten your decisions respecting such necessary public works as may give temporary employment and relief to such persons and the means of returning if they choose, to their former places of abode. At the same time, especial regard must be had to the condition of the provincial revenue, which evidently will not warrant any great amount of expenditure in that direction; nor with justice to the claims of settled labor in the Province, can it be expected that either permanent or highly-paid employment can be provided by the Government for any large number of strangers.

17. In connection with this subject you will, I have no doubt, consider the question, whether the present live stock in the Province are likely to be sufficient for the supply of any probable rush to this part of the country. You are aware that pleuropneumonia has found its way to Otago and Auckland. The Government of Canterbury have closed their boundary against cattle from the other Province, agreeing, however, to except Nelson and Marlborough on condition of closing their ports against the cattle of the Northern Island. The proceeding has, I regret to say, inconvenienced the settlers of the Amuri; nevertheless I have not at the present juncture thought it right to relieve this inconvenience at the cost of closing the market that has supplied us to some extent. I shall be glad to hear that these subjects have received your attention.

18. Trusting that your meeting may advance the permanent prosperity of the Province, I now leave you to your deliberations, and declare this Council open for the despatch of business.

J. P. ROBINSON,

*Superintendent.*