



THE
NEW ZEALAND
GOVERNMENT GAZETTE,

(PROVINCE OF NELSON.)

Published by Authority.

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ALFRED GREENFIELD, Provincial Secretary.

VOL. XVII.

NELSON, TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 1869.

No. 19.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL.

TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 1869.

The Nineteenth Session of the Provincial Council was opened this day at One o'clock, when the following Address of His Honor the Superintendent was delivered:—

MR. SPEAKER, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL.—

1. The visit of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh to this Province, will, I am confident, have given as much satisfaction to you as it has done to myself, and I believe to the community generally. I have endeavored, with the zealous assistance of the gentlemen appointed for that purpose at a public meeting, to afford to the Prince a reception which, while consistent with our means, should, at the same time, be in some degree worthy of our illustrious guest.

I have the gratification to inform you that I am commanded by the Prince to say that His Royal Highness was satisfied and pleased with his reception and entertainment.

His Excellency the Governor also desires me to assure the people of this Province of the great gratification which this, his first visit to them, has afforded him.

2. The Receipts of Revenue during the year have, I regret to say, fallen very far short of the estimate which I submitted to you at its commencement.

The Treasurer's Annual Statement, which will be laid upon your table, shows that instead of £144,000, at which I estimated them, the actual receipts have

only reached to the sum of £99,000, making a deficiency from my estimate of no less than £45,000. This deficit is attributable in some degree to the decrease in the population of the South West Goldfields, which took place early in the year, in consequence of the attraction of the Goldfields of Queensland and Auckland, but mainly to errors made by the Colonial Treasury in the sums paid to us during the previous year, on account of the Provincial share of the Consolidated Fund, and on account of Land Revenue.

These errors, which may be ascribed chiefly to the retrospective action of the "Public Revenues Act, 1867," consisted in the payment to this Province of nearly £16,000 more than we were entitled to, and as the payments were made in many cases by lump sums on account, unaccompanied by any definite figures, it was impossible to discover that any excess of payment had been made.

Not only, therefore, has the sum so paid in excess been deducted from the Revenue accruing to the Province during the year just ended, but my calculations as to Revenue for the same period, based upon these erroneous Receipts, have been entirely upset, the result being a deficit of at least £35,000, in addition to the decrease arising from the causes to which I have adverted, together with the general depression which prevails throughout the Colony.

As soon as the actual state of things became apparent to me, I reduced the expenditure upon public works as far as was consistent with engagements already entered into, to a point within the diminished means at my disposal, and devoted my attention to all practicable reductions in the departmental expenditure of the Province.

By the Estimates which will be submitted to you you will find that the reductions which have been made effect a saving to the extent of between £12,000 and £13,000 in the annual expenditure of the Province in salaries and contingencies.

In making so sweeping a retrenchment, I have performed a difficult and extremely unpleasant duty. I ask for your support and encouragement in a task which I have endeavored to execute with as little inconvenience to the public and as little hardship to individuals as under the circumstances was possible.

The principle upon which I have mainly effected this large reduction in our expenditure has been that which invariably guides commercial establishments in a similar position—namely, the reduction of the number of officers employed, and not the reduction of the salaries of those whose services cannot be dispensed with, and whose work is, in most cases, largely increased.

3. When the Estimates for the current year, which are now in course of preparation, are placed before you, you will see that I have abolished the formal distinction of "Departments" in the Provincial service, and have classed the various offices in groups under distinctive headings. Each officer will be required to give his services in any way in which they can be made efficiently available; an arrangement which although only occasionally practicable, will probably prove useful with a staff so greatly diminished.

4. The office of Commissioner of the South-west Goldfields having become vacant by the resignation of Mr. Kynnersley, I have not thought it necessary to appoint a successor to that officer, whose ordinary duties can, now that a line of telegraph has been established throughout the district, as well as with head quarters, be efficiently performed by the several Wardens, while the more settled character of the Goldfields renders the services of a resident officer with large powers comparatively unnecessary.

5. You will be aware that the execution of many of the Public Works, for which you made appropriation in your last session, has unavoidably been postponed, and that much dissatisfaction has arisen in consequence, especially on the West Coast, where a movement in favor of separation has been initiated, and a petition to the General Assembly, praying that the District may be formed into a separate Province or County, is now in course of signature.

This movement originated in Westport in consequence of my refusal to expend a large sum of money, without your authority and directly contrary to law, in the protection of the Colliery and Native Reserves from the destructive action of the Buller river. Reports upon this subject from the Colonial and Provincial Engineers will be laid before you, and I think you will agree with me that, allowing for the very probable destruction of portions of the work before the whole could be completed, it would be throwing away money with a less sum than £15,000.

While I deeply regret the danger to which both private and public property is exposed, I am not prepared to recommend you to withdraw that sum, or anything like it, from the amount available for expenditure on public works on the goldfields generally, to the manifest injury of the districts of Grey and Charleston, which have equal claims with Westport upon the public funds, especially in view of the fact that far more than its due proportion of the revenue has hitherto been expended in Westport; although I consider that the past expenditure has been fully justified by the importance of Westport as by far the best port on the West Coast of this island.

Looking to the immediate origin and object of the petition for separation, I can scarcely believe that any large proportion of the inhabitants of other districts of the goldfields will be induced to commit political suicide by attaching their names to it.

The petition itself abounds with the most gross and palpable mis-statements both of facts and figures. Its framers have not scrupled also to misrepresent the opinions I expressed in my first address to you on taking office; in one case by suppressing the concluding words of a sentence, and in another by applying words which I used in reference to the effect of the goldfields generally, those of Otago, Canterbury, and Nelson, upon the finances of the Colony, to the financial relations between the South-west Goldfields and the rest of this Province, to which the words quoted had no reference whatever.

If there were any truth in the allegations of the petition, that a due share of the revenue raised upon the goldfields had not been expended within them, I have no doubt the General Assembly would lend a willing ear to the prayer for a redress of the grievance, but, as a reference to the published accounts of the Province will at once show there is no foundation whatever for those allegations, I have little fear that the Assembly will consent to the establishment of additional Provinces or Counties, involving the multiplication of Governments and Councils, greatly increasing the already excessive administrative expenditure of the Colony, and adding to the existing number and complication of its laws.

My own opinions, as you are aware, have always been strongly in favor of the reduction instead of the increase of these evils, and you may rely upon my best efforts, as a member of the House of Representatives, in opposition to the petition to which I am referring, as well as to all others of a similar character.

6. The Waste Lands Board having been unsuccessful in their endeavors to lease the Brunner Coal Mine to a Company prepared to construct a Railway for the transport of the coals to Cobden, I have thought it better to continue to work the mine upon a small scale than to entrust it to a temporary tenant, who might work it with a view to immediate profit only, to the permanent injury of the property. Apart from the purchase of plant, amounting to about £2000, a small profit has resulted from the year's operations, but upon this subject I refer you to the detailed report of Mr. Warden Dutton.

7. An Act embodying the resolutions you agreed to in June last, enabling me to appoint an Agent in London, with full power to enter into a contract for the construction of a line of Railway from Nelson to Cobden and Westport, was passed by the General Assembly without material alteration. As soon as copies of the Act could be obtained, they were forwarded to Mr. Morrison, the agent for the Colony, as well as for this Province, together with copies of all surveys, reports, maps, plans, and other documents bearing on the subject, and a power of attorney under the seal of the Province. Mr. Morrison has acknowledged their receipt, but as the letters of instructions forwarded by the following mail had not reached him, he confines his letter to that acknowledgment, and a month or two will probably elapse before I can hope to receive from Mr. Morrison a report as to his prospects of success in the London Money Market.

8. Amongst the Public Works, the execution of which I have been compelled to abandon, is the proposed Dry Dock in Nelson Harbor, and my estimate of the probable revenue for the current year is not large enough to justify me in again proposing to you to appropriate the large sum required for this purpose. But the successful operation of a Floating Dock, which

has lately been constructed at Port Chalmers, leads me to think it desirable to amend the "Patent Slip or Dry Dock Act" of 1867, so as to enable me to guarantee interest for a term of years upon the much smaller amount of capital which would be required for a Floating Dock.

9. Although the new Hospital in this city has now long been completed, I have deferred its occupation until you should have an opportunity of expressing your opinion on the subject. The number of patients in the present Hospital is now, and has for a long time past been, so small, that I have been unwilling to incur the greatly increased expense which I fear so large an establishment, so utterly disproportioned to our present wants, would entail upon the Province.

I have also thought it desirable, in the absence as it appears to me of any necessity for its immediate application to the purpose for which it was built, to keep the new building unoccupied in view of a probability—not, I fear, in the present state of the North Island a very remote one—of accommodation being required for women and children whom it might be considered necessary to remove from Taranaki or Wanganui, and place under our care, as was the case eight years ago.

10. The building of the old Hospital being still occupied by patients, I have abandoned, for the present at all events, my intention to convert it into a home for destitute children. Arrangements have, however, been made for their maintenance and education at Motueka, which, unless the number of

children to be provided for should greatly increase, will I think prove more satisfactory and less expensive than those I contemplated last year.

11. A bill has been prepared for your consideration to repeal the various existing Representation Acts, in order to reduce the number of members forming your Body from twenty-six to nineteen. The number of members representing the goldfields has not been interfered with, the proposed reductions being confined to the more settled parts of the Province, so that the influence of the Goldfields members in your counsels will be greatly increased, while, by the formation of the new Electoral District of Charleston, the various interests of the West Coast will be more distinctly represented.

I think that if you should see fit to pass this measure into law it will tend materially to diminish the length, and consequently to reduce the cost, of your sittings, without interfering with your usefulness to the Province.

12. For full details of the various public works which have been executed during the year, I refer you to the able reports of the Provincial and District Engineers, and for information as to the present state and prospects of the Goldfields to those of the Wardens of the different districts.

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

OSWALD CURTIS,

Superintendent.