



THE
NEW ZEALAND
GOVERNMENT GAZETTE
(PROVINCE OF NELSON).

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ALFRED GREENFIELD, Provincial Secretary.

VOL. XXII.

NELSON, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 1873.

No. 12.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL.

TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 1873.

THE Twenty-third Session of the Provincial Council of Nelson was opened this day at Twelve o'clock, when the following Address was delivered by his Honor the Superintendent:—

MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL—

1. The receipts of revenue during the past year show a decrease of £7000 from those of the previous twelve months, having amounted to £63,000 only against £70,000 in 1871-2, while they have proved to be far below the estimated amount of £85,000.

The deficiency arises chiefly from the fact that the yield of gold from the Inangahua reefs has fallen far short of the expectations which had been formed, and that the ordinary goldfields revenue, as well as that which it was anticipated would be derived from the sale of land, and from additional gold duty, have been seriously affected in consequence.

The latter source of revenue has also been greatly diminished by the unprecedented continuance of dry weather, as well as by the reduction of sixpence per ounce made by the General Assembly, which came into operation on the 1st of January last.

In making a comparison between the present revenue of the province and that of former years, it must be borne in mind that much of the apparent diminution arises from the recent absorption by the General Government of a large portion of what was formerly Provincial revenue, although then as now collected by Colonial officers.

2. A Bill to provide for the establishment of special settlements was prepared in accordance with your resolutions of last session, and passed by the General Assembly. I regret however to inform you that a clause embodying the principle advocated in my opening address last year in the following words, "that any land set apart for special settlement shall be open to persons already resident in the colony upon the same terms as to newly arrived immigrants," and subsequently affirmed by your 6th resolution, was struck

out in the passage of the measure through Parliament. By the correspondence upon the subject which will be laid before you, you will see that I have pointed out to the Colonial Government the "injustice of excluding persons already resident in the colony from facilities in obtaining possession of land, reserving those facilities for the exclusive benefit of immigrants introduced at the public expense, to which the very persons so excluded are called upon to contribute" and have urged upon them the propriety of allowing the land to be thrown open in the manner contemplated by the Government and Council of the province unless they are advised that the law absolutely prohibits them from doing so. The subject is still under the consideration of the Colonial Government, but I trust to have a reply before your present session is closed, and in the event of the decision of the Government proving to be unfavourable in this respect, I propose to submit for your deliberation whether it will not be desirable to abandon the project of forming special settlements until the law permits of its being carried out upon an equitable footing.

3. Representations having been made to me by the holders of agricultural leases under the Goldfields Act of the disadvantageous position in which they are placed in comparison with lessees under the Crown Lands Leasing Acts, I propose to submit to you a resolution in favor of an amendment of the Goldfields Act providing that holders of agricultural leases shall be entitled to a second term of seven years at the same rent, and, at its expiration, to a Crown Grant without further payment. I have reason to believe that by this concession, should you agree to it, not only would a cause of reasonable complaint be removed, but a considerable impetus would be given to the permanent settlement of the country. A return laid upon the table of the House of Representatives during the last session of Parliament affords us the means of comparing our own progress in this respect with that of our neighbors. The number of agricultural leases issued upon the Nelson Goldfields up to the 31st March 1872, was 172, comprising 4447 acres; in the County of Westland the number at the same date was 17, comprising 157 acres. The number of goldmining leases shows a similar contrast, those issued in Nelson being 196 comprising 1435 acres against 14 comprising 90 acres in the County of Westland. The return for the twelve months just ended will show that the number of agricultural leases granted in this province and the area comprised in them, now amount to nearly double the figures above quoted, and that nearly the same result has been attained with respect to leases of land for gold mining.

4. Finding that the state of the revenue would not justify me in constructing the proposed wooden tramway from the Brunner Coal mine to the port of Cobden, I made application in July last to the Colonial Government for an advance of the sum required from the funds placed at their disposal for such purposes by the Immigration and Public Works Act, 1871. The Government declined to make the advance upon grounds which appear in the correspondence on the subject, from which you will also learn that a difference of opinion arose between the Colonial Government and myself as to the amount to be secured upon the property of this province on account of the

construction of the railway from Brunner to Greymouth—the Government requiring security for the estimated cost of the line, namely, £54,400, but ultimately consenting to accept security for £27,200, one half of the amount—the negotiation resulting therefore in reducing the liability of this province the sum of £27,200 from the amount originally demanded.

5. The support which I have always received from you towards promoting the construction of a narrow gauge railway through the heart of the province from Nelson to the Grey, encourages me to bring the question again under your notice with more hopeful conditions of a unanimous public opinion in its favor in this part of the province at all events and with the promise under specified conditions of material support and assistance from the Colonial Government.

For several months past a large and influential committee has been at work collecting and condensing the large amount of information upon the subject existing in the records of your proceedings and other public documents, and in obtaining much new and important evidence bearing more especially upon the probable cost of the work.

These labors have resulted in an able and exhaustive report upon the whole subject, and in the passing of certain resolutions founded upon it by a large and unanimous public meeting.

A deputation from the committee has also waited upon the Colonial Government and obtained from them a promise of support and assistance under the conditions specified in the correspondence, copies of which, as well as of the documents referred to in the preceding paragraphs, will be placed in your hands.

As the powers which I obtained from the General Assembly some years since, with your sanction, authorising the Governor to grant land in consideration of the construction of the line, to an extent not exceeding ten thousand acres per mile, are still in operation, I am not aware that any further action on your part will be required in that respect, but resolutions authorising me to lease to a company undertaking the formation of the through line, those portions about to be constructed by the Colonial Government between Brunner and Greymouth, and Nelson and Foxhill, and handed over to the province when completed—requesting the Waste Lands Board to grant to the company a lease of the Brunner coalmine—and authorising me to pay the cost of a working survey of the line from provincial funds, will be submitted to you.

I may remind you that the survey made by Mr. Wrigg in 1868, although a careful and trustworthy one so far as it goes, is of a preliminary character only, and requires to be supplemented by much fuller details before contracts for actual work could be entered into.

The proposal of the Colonial Government that the line should be extended from the Ahaura to join the north Canterbury line at the Hurunui—a distance of about eighty miles—is one to which I am confident you will gladly accede, not only on account of the assistance from Colonial funds, of which it is the condition, but still more on account of the Colonial

character which it imparts to the undertaking, by constituting it an important portion of a trunk line through the whole extent of the Middle Island.

The concurrence and support of the Province of Canterbury, which will doubtless be more readily afforded to the extended scheme will also, I am satisfied, conduce largely to its popularity and success.

I have so frequently placed upon record my conviction that the construction of this railway is absolutely essential, not only to the present welfare and prosperity, but to the permanent existence, in any satisfactory sense, of this province, and I am so well assured of your concurrence in that conviction, that I need now only commend this fresh vigorous and united effort for its accomplishment to your earnest attention to ensure for it your hearty support to the fullest extent that the resources of the province will permit.

6. In order to meet, if possible, the frequently expressed wish of the people of the South-west Goldfields for special legislation, conferring upon each district local control over the expenditure of its contribution to the provincial revenue, I have caused a bill to be prepared which provides for the constitution of separate districts upon petition of a majority of the inhabitants, and places one-half of the total gross revenue raised within each district for sales and rents of land, miners' rights, and business licenses at the disposal of a Board to be elected for the purpose, for expenditure upon the construction and maintenance of roads and other public works.

I earnestly trust that this measure will meet with your approval, as I am confident that if passed it will tend greatly to promote the growth of that good feeling between different sections of the community which is essential to the good government and permanent prosperity of the whole.

7. The Immigration and Public Works Act, 1872, having provided that a sum of £50,000 should be devoted to the construction of public works upon the South-west Goldfields, I recommended to the Colonial Government that the sum of £18,000, available for expenditure during the year ending 30th June next, should be apportioned as follows:—£6000 for a dray road from the Arnold to the Ahaura; £3000 for a cattle track from the Amuri to the Ahaura; £3000 for a dray road from Westport to Nine-mile Creek; and £6000 towards a dray road between the Lyell and the Matakitaiki.

The Government having decided, as will be seen from the correspondence to be laid upon your table,

to appropriate the whole of the £18,000 to the three first-named works, I shall invite you to join with me in recommending that the whole of the £25,000 which will be available for the succeeding year shall be expended in the formation of dray roads from the Lyell to the Matakitaiki, and from the Inangahua Junction to the Lyell.

The communication by dray road between the Port of Nelson and the Matakitaiki will, I trust, shortly be completed by other funds, and I do not think that any other work can be pointed out for execution upon any part of the South-west Goldfields which will compare in colonial as well as in provincial importance with that to which I ask your assent.

8. The important discoveries of coal which have been made at the Ngakawaho and its neighbourhood and at the Waimangaroa appear to me to justify the representatives of the province in urging upon the Colonial Government the importance of immediate action towards the construction of a railway adapted for coal traffic from the Ngakawaho to Westport from the funds practically assigned for that purpose by the General Assembly in the schedule to the railways Act 1872—namely £70,500 for Mount Rochfort Coalfield railway. I trust, therefore, that before separating, you will agree to a resolution to that effect, which it will give me great pleasure to support.

9. The rising importance of the Lyell district, the ascertained value of its gold-bearing reefs, and the probable attraction of a large population to the district within a very few months, appear to warrant the extension of the telegraph wires from Reefton to the Lyell township, and, subject to your approval, I propose to make the necessary recommendation to that effect to the Colonial Government.

10. The resignation by Mr Shephard of the office of Provincial Treasurer has enabled me to effect a considerable reduction in the expenses of the department by combining the office with that of the Provincial Secretary, who, although the duties of the two offices will undoubtedly be heavy, will I feel assured be able to perform them without inconvenience resulting to the public service. The correspondence which ensued upon the resignation of Mr Shephard will be laid upon your table.

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

OSWALD CURTIS,
Superintendent.