



T H E
NEW ZEALAND
GOVERNMENT GAZETTE
(PROVINCE OF NELSON).

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EUGENE J. O'CONOR, Provincial Secretary.

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NELSON, WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1875.

No. 11.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL.

TUESDAY, MAY 11, 1875.

The 26th Session of the Provincial Council was opened this day at One o'clock, when the following Address of the Superintendent was delivered:—

MR SPEAKER, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE
PROVINCIAL COUNCIL,

1. In opening your first session since the introduction of Responsible Government in the administration of the affairs of the Province, I desire to make it plainly understood that the views I shall express to you in doing so will be my own, as Superintendent of the Province, and not necessarily those of my Executive Council.

Although I am aware that the Superintendents of other Provinces in which the system of Responsible Government has been adopted are satisfied to confine their opening addresses to the expression of opinions dictated, or at least sanctioned, by their Executive Councils, I decline to accept that position, which appears to me to be wholly inconsistent with the existence of independent relations between the elected head of the Province and the Provincial Council.

2. Since the passing of the Executive Council Act of last session, I have endeavored to give full scope and fair play to its operation in order that the advantages and disadvantages of the measure may be fully tested.

I cannot ignore the fact that men of recognised political knowledge and ability hold and express the opinion that the Superintendent of a Province in

which the system of Responsible Government obtains should refuse to act upon any advice given to him by his Executive Council of which he himself disapproves. But apart from the consideration that such a refusal would be a direct breach of the law, it seems clear to me that, were this view to be acted upon, the Executive Council Act of 1874 would be reduced to an absolute nullity.

The Superintendent was quite at liberty to act upon such advice of his Executive as met with his approval, previously to the existence of that measure.

The facts that the Superintendent is a separate branch of the Legislature, and that he is elected by the people, do not neutralise the law, which declares that in his administrative capacity he shall act only in accordance with the advice of his Executive Council, and I may here observe that both the deliberative and the casting vote given to the Superintendent as President of the Executive Council, prove, in practice, to be of little value so far as regards decisions upon important questions. On all such questions the Executive Council necessarily vote in a body, as party discipline requires.

I feel bound to say, however, that with the exceptions to which I shall presently refer, I have succeeded in working in satisfactory accord with the first Responsible Executive Council.

3. In regard to the ordinary routine of administrative action, including the appointment, suspension, and dismissal of Provincial servants, matters which are explicitly placed, by the Act of last session, under the control of the Executive Council, I have in all cases acted upon the advice of that body as the law requires, and, although in some instances their

advice has not recommended itself to my judgment as being either expedient in the public interests, or just to the individuals concerned, I have not felt called upon to adopt the only remedy in my power by requiring the resignation of the Executive.

But when proposals were made to me in reference to a matter largely affecting the interests of the Province, namely, the expenditure of the sum of £50,000 voted by the General Assembly for the completion of the main roads from Devil's Grip to Westport and Greymouth—proposals to commence the work at both ends, but to complete the road from Westport to the Lyell, and if, as was then anticipated, the sum available should prove insufficient for the completion of the whole line, to leave a gap between the Matakitaiki and the Lyell, so as to postpone the long desired through communication between the port of Nelson with the intervening districts and the leading gold-fields, and to make it dependent upon the result of an application to the General Assembly for further assistance next session—I felt it to be my duty to inform the Executive Council that I should use such constitutional means as were open to me to prevent those proposals from being carried into execution; either by requiring my advisers to send in their resignations, or by summoning a special session of your Council. Modified proposals were thereupon submitted to me, and eventually arrangements which I could accept as satisfactory were agreed upon.

I am glad to be able to add that contracts for the whole of the line from the Grip to Westport have now been let with the exception of about five miles immediately below the Lyell, which have been delayed for further survey, and that the funds available will be sufficient to complete the entire road.

4. The General Government have agreed, on my recommendation, to expend £2,000, out of the sum of £60,000 voted by Parliament for Public Works in this Island, on the improvement of a portion of the road between Reefton and Greymouth, and when that has been done, and the existing contracts are completed, the entire line from Nelson through the heart of the Province to Westport and Greymouth, in all about 220 miles, will be available for wheeled traffic at all seasons.

I trust that you will appropriate a sufficient sum to enable me to secure frequent and regular communication by coach throughout the line as soon as it is completed.

5. In addition to the sum of £2000, out of £8,000 accruing to this Province from the vote of the General Assembly of £60,000 for public works in the South Island, which the Colonial Government have consented to expend, as I have already stated, in the improvement of the road between Squarctown and Little Grey Junction, the Minister for Public Works has also accepted my recommendation for the appropriation of £1000 to a road up the Takaka Valley, £700 to the improvement of the Cattle Track from the Ahaura Saddle to the Amuri, £1,000 to roads at Boatman's and Larry's Creeks, and £1000 to a bridge over the River Nile, at Charleston, the two latter sums to be supplemented by equal amounts contributed by the Provincial Government, but the whole to be expended under the supervision of the Colonial District Engineers.

The appropriation of the balance has not yet been finally decided upon.

6. In pursuance of the proposal I submitted to you last year, and which received your assent, I

introduced a Bill into the General Assembly to make provision for a loan to this Province of £250,000, to be raised during five years at the rate of £50,000 per annum, for the construction of a number of much required public works.

During the interval between the time at which I made this recommendation to you and the meeting of Parliament, a material change had taken place in the views of the Colonial Government with respect to Provincial loans, and after consultation with the other members for the Province, I withdrew the Bill and accepted the offer of the Government to advance the sum of £50,000 for the current year from the Consolidated Fund.

7. It will be in your recollection that previously to your last session I had with considerable difficulty obtained from the Colonial Government the promise of an advance of £20,000 in anticipation of the authority of the General Assembly for a loan of larger amount, in order that I might proceed with the construction of the main road through the Buller Valley. These works were in active progress at the time of your meeting, and I regret that you were induced to cause their abandonment by deciding to refuse the promised help of the Colonial Government, not only on account of the postponement for many months of the important work which is now approaching completion, but because I am convinced from the tenor of the conversations I had with the Premier on the subject that the sum of £50,000 now in course of expenditure might otherwise have been obtained, in addition to the refused £20,000, and other works of importance could consequently have been executed.

8. The necessity for the erection of several bridges over the large rivers crossed by the line of road I have just referred to, as well as of bridges in other parts of the Province, together with pressing requirements for roads in many localities, appear to me to justify an application to Parliament for a further loan of £50,000 for expenditure during the next financial year. A schedule of these works will be submitted for your consideration in the hope of obtaining your approval of their selection.

7. The progress of the railway works in the Province does not present a subject for congratulation. The first section of the main line from Nelson to the West Coast, extending to near Fox Hill, and the short line from the Brunner Coalmines to Greymouth were provided for by the General Assembly in the year 1871. The Fox Hill section is at length showing some signs of completion, but as regards its extension, without which it is almost valueless as a means of opening the country for settlement, the promised revision of the survey of last year has not yet been even commenced. The Brunner line, that remarkable specimen of a political railway, after a struggle of four or five years, also affords some promise of being open for traffic before the end of the year. The first estimate of its cost, for which a vote was taken in 1871, was £26,250. In 1872 the estimate was raised to £54,400, or more than doubled, and a vote taken for the difference of £28,150. In 1873 the estimate was raised to £74,000, and a vote taken for the excess of £20,000. In 1874 the estimate was raised to £84,000, and a vote taken for the additional £10,000; and this year I believe a further sum of at least £15,000 will be required. Whether the line can be maintained at all in its present position without enormous cost, or whether it will tumble into the river, are questions which time alone can decide. I believe it will be found necessary to abandon it and to re-construct it

on the north bank of the river, with terminus at Cobden, in accordance with the proposal I made to the Government in 1869, when my request for sanction to a loan of £30,000 for its construction was summarily refused. It is my conviction that had that request been granted and the work left to Provincial management, the line would have been in working order years ago at one-third the cost which the Colonial Government are expending upon it, at the expense, not of the Colonial Government, but of those of Nelson and Westland. As you will see on reference to the correspondence already printed in your records, had I not made a firm stand against so gross an injustice the whole cost would have been saddled upon this Province alone. The figures I have quoted will enable you to judge whether implicit reliance can be placed upon the calculations of the Colonial Engineers of the cost of the line from Fox Hill to Brunnerton, which they at present estimate at £8000 or £9000 per mile. An estimate which, as an average of the whole 150 miles, I hope will turn out to be almost as much mistaken, although in the opposite direction, as that made for the little line of seven miles from Brunnerton to Greymouth.

The line from Westport to Ngakawau, it is only just to say is, making steady progress, and shows promise of being completed in reasonable time, and at reasonable cost.

10. Your resolution of last session, in favor of the construction of a line of telegraph from Richmond to the Lyell, has been productive of good effects. The line is now under contract, and will be completed in a short time.

11. The resolutions you adopted last session for the consolidation and amendment of the laws regulating the sale and disposal of the Waste Lands were embodied in a Bill which I introduced to the General Assembly, and which was passed into law without material alteration.

The application of one common law to all parts of the Province, whether within or without the Goldfields, will, I am convinced, prove to be a great improvement upon the old and more restrictive system, but at the same time the exercise of their enlarged powers gives greatly increased work to the Waste Lands Board and the Land and Survey Department generally.

The enlargement of the Board will, I do not doubt, act beneficially to the public, as well as by way of relief to the existing members. It will be your duty to nominate one additional member during your present session.

12. The General Assembly having rejected the Bill which I introduced to enable the Corporation of the City of Nelson to purchase the plant of the Waterworks from the Province, I have not been able to fulfil my expressed intention to hand over those works and the Gasworks to the authorities of the City as soon as a Corporation was formed. In the meantime, I have placed the entire management of both in the hands of the Corporation, subject only to such restrictions as will protect the Province from the risk of loss in consequence of the liabilities under which it still rests.

13. The Act which you passed last session, authorising me to raise upon specified securities the sum of £30,000 for the completion of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum and the construction of a Wharf and Dry Dock in Nelson Harbor having been left to its operation by His Excellency the Governor, £3000 has been borrowed for the first mentioned purpose, and a preliminary agreement has been entered into for the

remainder of the amount. I trust, therefore, that the Government will soon be in a position to commence the works in the Harbor, which are so much required for the convenience of shipping and the progress of the Port.

14. The state of the Local Revenues Boards within the Goldfields will doubtless attract your attention. The repeal of the clause providing for the payment to these Boards of one-half the amount of certain specified revenue collected within their respective districts has been a great discouragement to their operation. Only two or three of them can be considered to be working satisfactorily, and some are practically, if not legally, defunct. I think it a matter for regret that at least the experiment of allowing local control over local revenues was not allowed a trial, for I believe that the present unsatisfactory condition of these Boards, and their frequent squabbles with the Provincial Government, would have been avoided had a fixed proportion of the revenues locally raised remained secured by law to each Board, and subject to their unrestricted management and control.

15. The question of the establishment of Special Settlements is one which, you are aware, has occupied my attention and that of my advisers for several years past. The want of funds for the purpose both of forming such settlements, and of giving temporary employment to the settlers has, until recently, prevented any active steps being taken under the Act which I passed through the General Assembly in the year 1872. Last session, however, the Assembly voted a sum of £8000 for the settlement of immigrants in this Province, which enabled a first experiment to be tried. The original intention when the Act I have referred to was passed was to form one or more Special Settlements in the Upper Buller in connection with the expenditure upon roads in that district which it was hoped the General Assembly would authorise. Subsequently, upon the strong recommendation of the Immigration Officer, it was determined to make the Karamea the site of the first experiment. About sixty families are now located there, and the success which has hitherto attended the efforts of the Provincial Government appears to me to be exceedingly satisfactory. It is no doubt, however, premature to express a confident opinion as to the permanence of that success, as the time of trial will come when the assistance of the Government, upon which the settlers have hitherto so largely depended, is necessarily withdrawn.

16. During the past nine months four vessels have arrived at this port with 883 immigrants from Great Britain and Ireland, of all ages and sexes, equal to 737 statute adults, as permanent residents in the Province. An additional number of 262, equal to 219 statute adults, who arrived by the same vessels, were forwarded to other Provinces according to their original destination, or for other special reasons.

I am happy to say that the whole of these persons, with a very few exceptions caused by sickness, have either been provided with employment, or have become settlers upon land in the Karamea.

One more vessel with immigrants may be looked for in a few weeks, but no further arrivals can be expected for some months afterwards, as the Minister for Immigration has been requested to suspend the shipment of immigrants for this Province during the time which would lead to their arrival in the winter months.

The number of persons sent for by their friends here during the past year under the system of free

nominated immigration was 292, equal to 260 statute adults. Of these only about 20 have as yet reached the Province.

17. In my address to you last year I was able to point to a slight increase in the revenue which had taken place in the preceding financial year, and I expressed a hope that the improvement would be both permanent and progressive. That hope has not been realised, as the revenue for the year just ended shows on the contrary a slight decline, which may however be attributed to the difficulty the Government has experienced in obtaining the execution of surveys, and the consequent delay in bringing salable land in the Buller and Grey districts into the market, the proceeds of which will, I think, justify the Treasurer in calculating upon a material increase in the receipts of revenue during the year now commencing.

The amount of public works executed out of Provincial funds has therefore been considerably less than was contemplated; reaching, indeed, only £18,500 against £21,000 in the preceding year. At the same time a large expenditure has been incurred for surveys, which, as I have mentioned, will shortly be reproductive, and the overdraft at the Bank of New Zealand has been substantially reduced.

18. As I have in several parts of my address made reference to the different sums appropriated to the use of this Province during the late session of Parliament I think it well to place them before you in the aggregate, to enable you to see at a glance what addition to the ordinary resources of the Province has been derived from Colonial funds.

In addition to the customary capitation allowance of fifteen shillings per head of the population, the following appropriations were made:—

For roads from the Devil's Grip to Westport and Greymouth	£50,000
For public works, at discretion of Minister for Public Works	8,000
For immigration buildings and expenses in connection therewith	3,000
For settlement of immigrants	8,000
Special grant in aid of capitation allowance	5,000
Total	£74,000

19. It may perhaps be expected of me that I should make some reference to the contemplated abolition of the Provincial form of local government.

It is almost unnecessary that I should remind you that I have always advocated the gradual diminution

of the powers of Provincial Governments and Councils with a view to their ultimate extinction when the progress of the settlement of the country, and the increase in the facilities of communication throughout the Colony, should deprive them of much of their usefulness. I could not, however, support the resolution proposed by the Premier last session in the House of Representatives, firstly, because I considered that so important a change should not be decided upon without reference to the people. Secondly because I could not agree to the partial abolition of Provincial institutions and the introduction of one more complication in our already sufficiently complex political system by the establishment of conflicting forms of Government on the two islands, and thirdly because the resolution pledged those who supported it to maintain intact what is known as the Land compact of 1856, the effect of which would be eminently disastrous to the people of this Province who would be required not only to pay the interest and principal of the loans which they have themselves raised, and by which they have themselves benefitted, but also to contribute largely to the payment of the interest and principal of the debts contracted by the wealthy Provinces of Canterbury and Otago; of which those Provinces only have derived the advantage.

If the proposals, which it is understood that the Colonial Government are now preparing, should be free from the objections I have specified, and should also make fair provision for local government in place of the institutions to be destroyed, I shall not be found in the ranks of their opponents upon this question.

20. It is not the intention of the Government to ask you to legislate during the present Session upon any matters of leading importance.

The only Bills it is at present decided to submit to you, are a Bill to give certain additional powers to Road Boards, a Bill to give power to the Superintendent to levy tolls on roads and bridges, and a Bill to authorise the sale of the land purchased some years ago as a site for a Central Lunatic Asylum.

21. The usual Annual Report of the Wardens of the Goldfields, of the Provincial Engineer, and of other Heads of Departments will shortly be laid upon your table, and will put you in possession of the details necessary for your information.

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

OSWALD CURTIS,
Superintendent.