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OF

HIS HONOR THE SUPERINTENDENT
ON OPENING THE FORTIETH SESSION OF THE PROVINCIAL
COUNCIL OF CANTERBURY.

MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN,

In opening the last Session of your Council it is gratifying to me to be able to congratulate you upon the prosperity of the Province, which has been steadily increasing during the past four years.

During my previous term of office the extension of our Railways was initiated, and a system of steady Immigration, combined with Works for the opening up of the country, was recommended to and adopted by the Provincial Council. At the last meeting of that Council, as corollaries upon the extension of the railways, it was suggested to place the cost of immigration upon borrowed capital for a period of years, and to enlarge our wharfrage accommodation to meet the trade of the port. The construction of the main trunk lines of railway and the conduct of immigration was shortly afterwards taken charge of by the Colonial Government; and, during the past four years, thirty-two miles of additional railways have been constructed, of which nineteen miles were made by the Province, on a system of small contracts, the Province importing its own material

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The completion of the Rakaia Bridge, which was commenced in the year 1869, is also a matter for congratulation.

The wharfage accommodation has been gradually enlarged, and it is hoped that the large jetty at the end of the mole at Officers' Point will be open for the berthing of vessels during the approaching grain season. Tenders have now been received for the extension of the works authorised by you.

The Christchurch Hospital, the Gaols in Lyttelton and at Addington, the Lunatic Asylum, and the Orphanage in Lyttelton, in view of the rapid increase of the population, have had considerable additions made to them, and I shall now ask you to make still further appropriations for the same objects, as well as for the Hospital at Timaru. The Reformatory at Burnham is ready for inmates.

Through the courtesy of the Colonial Government, I have obtained, what I consider, a very satisfactory plan for the Bridge over the Gorge of the Waimakariri.

The spread of the sales of land in the districts at the foot of the hills will justify your authorising a further instalment of the complete system of road communication in those districts, which I suggested to you at your last Session.

The authorisation by the Colonial Legislature of the railway from Timaru to the Waitangi will enable the sites of the bridges on that line to be determined, and the works authorised by you to be proceeded with.

An Act was passed during the last Session of the General Assembly, to vest the western side of Cathedral Square in the Crown, for the purpose of public buildings. I am informed that the plans are being prepared, but that a further vote in addition to that already sanctioned will be required, if the buildings are to be worthy of the city, and the site which has been selected.

In accordance with the resolutions passed by you at your last Session, I have obtained the services of Mr. Andrew Duncan, to promote a more adequate stream of Immigration to this Province. I also placed myself in communication with the Colonial Government, with the view of urging upon them the necessity of granting free passages to immigrants nominated by their friends. In the absence of action on their part, I thought it right to take steps which enabled persons residing in this Province to nominate their friends free of cost. The result was that a considerable number were nominated during the months of July and August. I am glad to learn that the Colonial Government have since adopted the same course throughout the Colony. I am convinced that by this, more than by any other means, the real settlement of the Colony will be promoted. Colonisation is not the importation of labour to make roads and bridges, but the creation of a united people, bound together by personal ties, and by the love of the same laws and institutions. At my instance, the Colonial Government has consented to assist in erecting buildings for the reception of immigrants at the Ashburton and at the Waimate. I pressed this course upon their consideration, from a conviction that, sooner or later, the pouring of immigrants in large numbers into the towns would lead to bad consequences, and that it would be only by this means that the wants of the outlying districts, where little or no house accommodation exists, would be provided for.

The returns from the railway for the year ending September 30, 1873, show an excess of receipts over expenditure to the amount of nearly £20,000. The receipts from passengers on the Lyttelton and Christchurch line have risen from £7667 9s. 4d. in 1867-1868, to £9371 2s. 1d. in 1872-1873. On the Southern line, from £3683 14s. 5d. in 1867-1868, to £7656 8s. 4d. in 1872-1873. While the receipts from goods traffic during the same period have risen on the Lyttelton and Christchurch line from £15,896 18s. 4d. to

£35,499 0s. 9d. ; and on the Southern line from £5339 11s. 9d. to £10,434 1s. 0d. I mention this as showing the steady increase of traffic, and not as indicating any opinion that it is desirable for the country to make a revenue out of its railways. My own opinion is in a different direction. I should wish to see not only the cost of carriage by land reduced to the lowest possible point, but a large reduction of all port and wharfage charges. This would be possible by the endowment in land of a Harbour Trust, to meet the interest on the Harbour Works Loan. Such a policy would obviously have a more than Provincial bearing. I have here to allude to the difficulty which exists in meeting the increased traffic on the railway with the existing appliances. The difficulty is rendered greater, partly owing to the transition state of the lines in respect of the width of gauge, and partly owing to the large quantity of railway material which is being carried the full length of the lines. The subject will, no doubt, have your careful consideration. Personally, I am of opinion that the best professional advice should be taken, through a Commission to be appointed for the purpose, as to the arrangements to be adopted hereafter to meet the necessity which has been forced upon us by the Colonial Legislature.

The general diffusion of Education throughout the population is shown not only by the number of schools which are springing up, even in the remotest districts of the Province, but by the steadily increasing numbers of those attending them. Since the year 1869, the numbers attending the public schools have been more than doubled, the total number attending in the last September quarter of 1873 being 6816. Your determination to make the social and intellectual progress of the Province keep pace with its material prosperity was strikingly shown by the liberality of your provisions last year for all the Educational Institutions. The sum actually spent on Education has grown from £7445 19s. 7d. in 1870, to £26,430 9s. 1d. in the present year, when your appropriations for school buildings alone, including the Normal and Municipal Schools, amounted to more than £50,000. A contract has been entered into for the erection of the Normal School at a cost of £11,280. A Report showing the advance made towards the establishment of the College and Public Library will be laid before you. It has been thought advisable to postpone the additions to the Museum for the present until greater facilities for building are available. You will be asked to re-vote the unexpended balance for which engagements have been incurred for the erection of School Buildings, with a considerable additional amount for the current year. In the permanent interests of the country, I know of no more advantageous expenditure than that which I now propose, and which you have hitherto so liberally sanctioned. I should fail in my duty if I omitted to take this occasion to express my high sense of the unremitting zeal and industry which is brought to bear upon the department by the Board of Education.

Though a meeting of a new Council and Superintendent will most probably take place before the winter, I shall ask you to make liberal appropriation to the Road Boards, to enable them to commence operations so soon as the harvest is over. In view of the extension of the railways and of the large immigration which, I am informed, is contemplated by the Colonial Government, it is of the greatest importance that the construction of roads should be pressed on throughout all districts of the Province. In your appropriations for this object you will no doubt be mindful of the fact that a large proportion of the funds in hand is not recurring revenue, but capital entrusted to the Legislature for the purpose of opening up communication with the lands from which it is derived, and that the high price which is received for our land is, in fact, a capitalising of taxation, which would otherwise fall over a lengthened period upon the purchasers of waste lands.

In anticipation of the works which it will be necessary to put in hand in the early autumn, I shall ask you to authorise a more considerable vote than heretofore for plantations on public reserves. The improvement of the public estate in this way appears to me of great importance.

In accordance with resolutions passed by you at your last Session, an Act was passed in the General Assembly to amend certain points in the Waste Lands Regulations. Though the Act as passed differs in some particulars from the precise form recommended by you, I believe it will give effect to the intention of your resolutions.

A Report showing the satisfactory progress of the survey of sold and reserved lands and of roads, will be placed before you.

At the present season of the year, when active agricultural operations are about to commence, and at the near approach of the termination of this Council, I do not intend to propose measures involving lengthy consideration.

It only remains for me to express my confident hope that your deliberations will conduce to the maintenance of the prosperity which the Province is now enjoying.

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

WM. ROLLESTON,

Superintendent.

CHRISTCHURCH :

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