



THE
GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

OF THE

PROVINCE OF MARLBOROUGH.

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A. P. SEYMOUR,
Superintendent.

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THURSDAY, MAY 4, 1865.

[No. 100.]

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL.

TUESDAY, MAY 2, 1865.

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

MR SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL—

I have called you together in order to submit to your notice various matters of importance, which will require your calm and careful consideration, and I thank you for your attendance. And first I think it would be proper for me to furnish you with a statement, showing as nearly as I am able the conduct of the affairs of the Province since the termination of the last session of your Council; and I trust to your patience to bear with me if I somewhat exceed the usual limits of an address of this kind, and to keep in mind that my only desire is to cause you to become as well informed on every subject of interest as possible; and owing to my not (as has heretofore been customary with Superintendents of this Province) occupying a seat at this table, I feel desirous of making my statement as clear and explicit as possible.

FINANCE.

On my accepting office in September last I found that, from various causes principally connected with the goldfield or contingent upon it,

the Province had expended during the quarter ending the 30th September, 1864, £20,097 2s. 2d., and it was apparent that such an amount of expenditure could not certainly be sustained, and that my first duty was clearly that of retrenchment.

I therefore commenced a system of reduction as speedily as possible, and the balance-sheets show the amount expended for the October quarter ending on the 31st of December, 1864, £9733 14s. 11d., and for the quarter ending March 31st, £11,161 10s. 8d.

On my election I stated that it should be my endeavor, if possible, to keep the Province out of debt as far as the usual current expenses were concerned, although I heartily support the proposal to raise funds by way of loan for our railway, which I consider a judicious outlay of money, and one which would shortly prove reproductive.

The impossibility however of at once reducing the expenditure to within the desired limit, or, if I may so describe it, of arresting the rolling ball, as well as the necessity of at once executing works of some magnitude for which you voted money last session has, I regret to say, precluded my carrying out entirely my own intention in this respect; and the Province stands now indebted to the Bank in the sum of about £4000; no great amount certainly, but still I had hopes of presenting you with a more favorable balance-sheet. To this result the present inactive state of gold-mining operations has tended not a little, whilst the returns from land sales also have not nearly reached the estimated amount.

LAND AT HAVELOCK GOLDFIELDS.

Fully alive to the importance of placing land in the market, more particularly in the vicinity of the goldfield, in order to induce settlement, I had the necessary steps taken without any delay to throw open for purchase a quantity of town and suburban allotments in and near Havelock; but the time occupied in the surveying and the usual and necessary routine, resulted in the opportunity of advantageously disposing of these lands being for the present missed. I however look forward with some degree of confidence to a more prosperous condition of our goldfield, when these lands, now open for selection, will be taken up.

POLICE.

You will wish to know, as at the close of last session the staff of officials and police on and in connection with the goldfield was considerable, what steps I have taken to meet the now more limited demand for their services. I have to inform you that in a ratio corresponding with the state of the population, I have from time to time reduced the police force of the Province from twenty-three, which it numbered at a former period, to seven; two of whom are located at Havelock and on the goldfield—a number quite small enough to maintain any degree of efficiency; two in Picton; two in Blenheim; and at Kaikora, in consequence of information received of an infringement of the Licensing Act and of the disorderly state of the township, the appointment of one of the police force there appeared highly necessary, and has, I am happy to say, had the desired effect.

OFFICIALS.

I have also deemed it necessary to dispense with the services of the Mining Surveyor and the Bailiff and Inspector of Licenses, and at present retain only the services of the Warden; and looking forward as I do to the revival, if I may so term it, of mining operations on the field, I should strongly recommend that the present Warden's services be retained; the sub-officials can be readily replaced, but I should be at a loss to find another warden on whose efficiency and integrity I could so entirely repose confidence, and I feel that it is of the first importance to have a reliable resident head of the goldfield staff, be it small or great.

FINANCE GOLD FIELDS.

I have had prepared for your information a return of the Revenue and Expenditure as nearly as may be in connection with the Gold Field, and although it would certainly appear that it had resulted in pecuniary loss to the province, yet at the same time the impetus given to trade, giving amongst other benefits a direct return in the shape of Customs Revenue, which has now become something real and tangible, together with a large increase in population, a portion of which though small becomes settled; must be accounted as conferring a solid benefit on the Province, whilst it must be remembered that the relatively most expensive part has been defrayed, viz., the first establishment of the necessary staff. We have realised the fact of a Gold Field, we are in a position now to count the cost more correctly, and may congratulate ourselves I think with justice on being in a better financial position than any other province with like experiences.

FINANCE PROVINCIAL.

I have likewise had Returns compiled shewing the sums which have been expended under the

various heads of the two last Appropriation Acts, some few of which show an excess of expenditure over the voted amounts. This has arisen from causes beyond my control, and although I have been very desirous of confining the expenditure within the authorised limits, yet I have found it impossible in all cases to adhere strictly to that rule.

In some instances I have found that this result has been unavoidable, and I may instance as one case the amount paid on the Picton Road through the fact of their having been at the time of the passing of the Appropriation Act No. 2, no means of ascertaining the amount of outstanding liabilities in the shape of unfinished contracts, nor any record easily obtainable of the amounts expended at any given date under the head and for the various purposes for which you had set apart certain sums.

To meet this want I have caused books to be kept in each of the Departments which show at a glance the several sums voted under their respective headings, and the amount spent upon each of them at any date. These records I have found of the utmost service.

PICTON ROAD.

With regard to the excess on the vote Picton Road, I have to observe that when I asked for an additional sum which I deemed would be sufficient I was in ignorance of their being contracts in hand and other liabilities to the extent of nearly £250 besides a large amount due for metal; and a further sum of £200 voted under the head of Existing Contracts has never been made use of.

On the several items:—

Pelorus Road.

Fairfield Downs.

Tools and Implements.

the votes had been exceeded before I took office, and I have contributed to swell the amounts of these overdrawn accounts only to a very limited extent, and chiefly where it was unavoidable.

ROADS.

There are some works which have not been commenced, owing to the limited means at my disposal, I have been enabled only to carry out such as were most necessary; and with respect to Roads, I have confined myself principally to endeavouring in as economical a manner as possible to keep them in such a state of repair as the nature of the traffic demanded. I should, however, have been far better pleased had the state of the treasury permitted me to accomplish all the works contemplated by you in your Appropriation Acts.

It would be perhaps premature to express an opinion on the result of the works which I have had constructed on the Sandhill Road. This much however I may venture to say, that though expensive the viaducts have been well and substantially erected, and I have no hesitation in expressing my belief they will be found effectually to accomplish their purpose of maintaining the road above flood level.

*VISIT TO KAIKOURA.

After an interval of nearly 13 years I have lately visited the Kaikora District and must express myself much pleased as well as surprised at the large area of rich land there situated, and am of opinion that a few years will develop a most flourishing settlement in that portion of the Province. I would wish however to make this one remark with regard to the assessment made on that land; and although that is a subject

which does not usually come under the consideration of the Council, yet in this instance I should be glad to have your opinion also.

I feel sure that the uniform price hitherto placed upon it has been too great, and has probably operated injuriously by preventing settlement, and that to attain the desired result as quickly as one would wish, the whole of the unsold land should be re-assessed in most cases at a lower figure; a portion of the sections consist of rich fern land free from stone well situated as regards drainage. Some of this has been already purchased, and I consider land of that character is worth £2 per acre. Another considerable portion consists of rich swamp having apparently a good fall, but requiring an extended system of drainage. In its present state I do not think this ought to be priced so high owing to the outlay required before it can be made available.

KAIKORA.

If the provincial funds would admit, I have no doubt that the construction of some main drains would be a judicious outlay of money, and one which would soon realise a good return, not only in actual cash, but by promoting speedy settlement. Should we, however, be unable to provide for this work, land of that class ought to be reduced in price.

There are also many sections with grass, scrub, and rough vegetation upon them, covered, however, almost entirely with boulders, which appear to have been swept down from the mountains, and deposited to a considerable depth over what may possibly have been once good rich land. Such can never be cultivated; and I should consider 10s. per acre a sufficient upset price. From these remarks I think you will agree with me in the advisability of having an assessment made, having regard to the actual value of each section, according to its description.

BRIDLE ROAD.

The new bridle road, now in course of construction, from Kaikora to the Conway river, is rapidly progressing. The work is being carried out in a most excellent manner, and will, when completed, open a very satisfactory means of communication with the neighbouring Province, and one which was much needed. The thanks of the Government are due, and I take this opportunity of expressing them, to those gentlemen who have, at much individual trouble, taken upon themselves the task of supervising the public works in their district.

CENSUS.

Of the census taken lately I need only say that a careful examination shows the very satisfactory progress of the Province, even after eliminating the returns from the goldfield, as regards population, permanent improvements, and increase in what specially constitutes wealth and indicates general activity.

SUPREME COURT.

I have endeavored to the utmost of my power to urge upon the Ministry the importance of our having a session of the Supreme Court held in this Province; and I am happy to say that my representations have been favorably entertained, and I look forward shortly to the fulfilment of the oft-repeated request of this Council upon this point.

BILLS TO BE LAID BEFORE COUNCIL.

I now turn more particularly to the business

for which I have summoned you. The Government will lay before you the following bills:—

Education Bill
Roads District Bill
Public Reserves Bill
Presbyterian Church Bill
Poison Bill
Drainage Bill
Loan Bill.

Of these the first two relate unquestionably to matters of the first importance, and require the most careful investigation. I therefore caused them to be prepared and forwarded to you some time back, that you might have an opportunity of a full examination prior to discussing their merits at this table.

EDUCATION ACT.

It may be very readily conceded that the operation of the Education Act now in force has been most inharmonious, but at the same time it may be argued that by careful selection of schoolmasters and officers such want of harmonious action as but lately existed might readily be obviated; and indeed certain changes made of late appear to have produced a more satisfactory state of working than has previously obtained. But I am strongly of opinion that there is inherent in the measure as it now stands a great radical defect; it is no less than the actual constitution of the Central Board; and I may explain my grounds for making this assertion by stating that on my election to office I found one education district entirely unrepresented in the board: for a considerable period no person could be found to accept the duties of member, and at a subsequent general election of the board at the commencement of the year the same difficulty was again experienced. Even with the present limited number of educational districts it has been found difficult to obtain a sufficient attendance of members at meetings for the transaction of business; and with a far more extended system of education, which the Province certainly now demands and which I trust to see realised, this difficulty I am satisfied would present insurmountable obstacles under existing arrangements. In the measure now submitted to you this is met by the appointing the Provincial Government, the only body which possesses all the conveniences and opportunities for the service to act in the capacity of and to be the Central Board.

The household rate of the present Act, a rate whose only recommendation is based upon its easy collection, and which anywhere but in the principal towns, bears but an infinitesimal proportion to the expenditure required, is not included in the provisions of this measure.

ROADS DISTRICT BILL.

It will be admitted on all sides that a well-considered measure, dividing the Province into Districts for the maintenance of its roads, and the appointment of local boards directly interested in them, in other words a well-digested workable Country Roads Act would be of infinite service. I shall not occupy your time in discussing the merits of the principle. With respect to its details, and the particular Bill in question, I will say a few words.

The Bill, as it has been submitted to your inspection, is not in many points such as the Government had intended; and owing to certain unforeseen delays in the preparation, I had no other course to pursue than to allow it to be put in print, and forwarded to you, with its imperfections, in order that you might have some time for private consideration before meeting to discuss it. The Government simply, therefore, lay

it before you as a suggestion as a ground upon which to ascertain the wish of the Council.

BILLS IN GENERAL.

And I would here take occasion to remark that in the preparation of Bills involving principles, so important as are contained in measures of this nature, the Council itself ought to take the first steps. I do not consider it any part of the duty of the Government to even endeavour to frame such; rather the Council should first declare what Bills it would wish to see introduced, and the particular principles to be embodied in them, and then, during the recess, it would be the duty of the Government to get drafts prepared in accordance with such instructions.

In short, the Government, which ought to be strictly executive, by endeavouring to take upon itself a portion of the legislative function which solely belongs to the Council, pursues a course which can, and in my experience does, lead to delays innumerable.

Of the other Bills, some are mere matter of form, which will not occupy your attention long. Others you had before you at a former session, and were left incomplete; and there remains perhaps but one on which I should make any remark.

RAILWAY.

I need not to you advocate the merits of the work for which I ask you to pass a Loan Bill. They have been so long and often discussed, as to assume the proportions of established facts.

Success has however hitherto been denied to us, nor should I again submit it to your consideration, but that I look to a more satisfactory result. From my recent personal interview with the Ministry on this subject, I am emboldened to again ask for their sanction to this loan to construct a railway between Picton and Blenheim. The Ministry is disposed to take the matter into its favourable consideration, but upon certain conditions. It will be necessary to obtain estimates, as correct as possible, of the probable amount of traffic along the line, of the cost, and working expenses of the same.

It will be also necessary to set apart a block of land, which may be held as security for the sum to be borrowed. It would, however, resolve any doubts at present entertained by the Ministry, and lead to our obtaining its cordial sanction, if this Council would consent to levy a small rate in order to meet, at least, a portion of annual interest and sinking fund; and I would urge you to adopt this course as insuring at once a favourable answer, and showing at the same time that we are acting in all sincerity and good faith. Should you be disposed to do this, I will cause a Bill to be prepared without delay, carrying into effect your suggestions, and, by this means, obviate all unnecessary printing and expense, which might be incurred in submitting to you a measure embodying principles which you might be unwilling to accept, or might wish materially to alter.

ESTIMATES.

I have purposely omitted preparing any Estimates for you at present for these reasons:

It is necessary that I should first be made acquainted with the mode in which you intend to deal with the Roads District Bill, as, evidently, the course pursued with reference to that measure will of itself affect all Estimates for public works.

LAND REVENUE.

The territorial revenue has this year fallen so far short of what it was expected to realise, that the question of estimating a return from the sources which supply that particular branch of revenue is involved in considerable uncertainty. It would be, perhaps, hardly safe to expect, as a rule for the future, that the territorial revenue will realise as much as it has hitherto; and the deficit must be met partly by establishing other sources of revenue, partly by inaugurating a more economical system in the general government and management of the Province.

To meet the first proposition the Roads District Bill is designed; and for the second, had I considered that a small reduction in salaries and economical arrangement of the official staff on the existing basis as sufficient for the required purpose, it would have been but an easy task to have framed estimates with such a view; such however would not meet the case. A very little inspection would suffice to show that the expenditure in official salaries in which any material change could be effected is not great; but that the real burden on the treasury may be cited under the heads—

Gaol
Police
Printing
Medical aid
Interest
Education.

I am prepared to furnish you with all information in my power to give which you may require in addition to the returns which I now lay before you, and it will be for you to suggest the mode in which you would desire to see the machinery of government so carried on that the cost may be prudently confined within the limits of our probable revenue, in accordance with which suggestions your Government will be prepared with as little delay as possible to lay before you detailed estimates.

I fear that I have already occupied much of your valuable time, and my apology must be that at the risk of appearing tedious I was unwilling that any point of interest upon which I deemed you should be informed should be omitted in this address. I have however much pleasure in thanking you for your attention to me whilst I have endeavored to point out the subjects of chief importance, and again begging of you to give them the careful consideration which may lead to the satisfactory conduct of the affairs of this Province, I now leave you to your deliberation, and declare this Council open for despatch of business.

A. P. SEYMOUR,
Superintendent.