

The small result derived by this District from the performance by the Wellington Government of its obligations in this respect is evident. And such treatment is, and will continue to be, a consequence to be expected, so long as the expenditure and distribution of our Revenue is under the unreserved control of the Legislature of a Provincial Capital; to the neglect of the interests and urgent requirements, as regards Harbour Improvements, Roads, Public Buildings, and the other obvious wants of a young District like this. Witness the past unjust application of the Revenue of this District to objects wide apart from those to which it should have been devoted, and the insignificant portion that has been awarded to this District from out of that large Loan, for which its future resources and our means of improvement will be so severely taxed and crippled.

Your petitioners beg that they may be excused, for here quoting, on account of their appositeness, the following observations made by Earl Grey in his recent work, "The Colonial Policy of the administration of Lord John Russell:"—

"The effect, therefore, of making over these funds (from Sales of Land) to the Local Legislatures, would be to place the money at the disposal, not of those from whose contributions it is derived, but of the inhabitants of the Colonial Capitals, who, it might be feared, would apply it to objects in which they are themselves interested, rather than for the benefit of the contributors."

Thus your petitioners trust that they have shown valid and sufficient reasons for their very great dissatisfaction with their present relations with Wellington, and for their confirmed opinion that in a termination alone of this position, accompanied by the bestowal on this District of Local Self-Government in its integrity, lies the only security for the welfare and progress of Ahuriri. And for these local rights and powers they now prefer their claim, and petition, by no means on the accidental grounds of the treatment received from Wellington,—which has been detailed chiefly for its forcible illustration of the injustice of their position,—but on the ground of the legitimate rights that they derive from the Constitution Act, of which the main principle, scope, and intention is, to confer at the due time, the power of local Self-Government upon Districts such as this, which by its Harbour and Port, geographical position, extent, and other particulars, possesses all those characteristics that enjoin as just and indispensable the means of a separate independent action and expenditure in regard to local affairs. For detrimental to true liberty indeed would have been the change, if such a subjection as this to the present distant Provincial Capital, could be considered anything but as being contrary to the true and natural tendency and object of the substitution of Colonial Self-Government for the Imperial rule.

Your petitioners would here observe that they have not lost sight of the expenses of the Land and Survey Department in this District, which they consider may be fairly charged against Ahuriri whenever any adjustment of accounts takes place, but in regard to a sum of £18,000, or more, expended for the purchase of lands in this District,—although the present Superintendent of Wellington in his explanatory endeavours to bring this District in debt to the Provincial Government, chose to debit this District with the aggregate amount of the whole land purchase expenditure,—it appears to your petitioners hardly necessary to point out the manifest injustice of charging this District with a sum, as due to the Provincial Treasury, that had been defrayed before the waste lands had been handed over to the Provinces, from the general funds of the whole Colony; and very justly so defrayed, as it was for the advantage of the Colony as a whole, and of the hundreds of people yet to come, and not for the benefit only of the few settlers at present.

It only remains now for us to represent the condition of this District in regard to population and wealth.

By the last Census, taken in March 1857, the European population was 982; the number of Sheep, 130,668; of Horses, 382; of Cattle, 3081, representing an amount of wealth of not less than £200,000, which will this year, by the increase of Sheep and Stock, amount to over £250,000. The Export of Wool last year, was 300,000lbs, which may be valued at £23,000. The value of its Wool Export this year will not be over-estimated at £35,000; of Wheat, principally shipped on the Coast for the Port of Auckland, £4,500; of Maize and Potatoes, £800; of Oil and Bone from the fisheries at the North end of the Bay, £2,500; of Wethers exported to Auckland, (probably) £1,500; making the total value of Exports £44,800. Our Customs Receipts from this Port, will this year, from Spirits and Tobacco alone, be probably more than £2,000.

Our prospects from the Sale of Land are equal if not superior to those of any Province or District in the Colony. The amount received in cash for Sales of Land during the year just passed, has exceeded £20,000.

And, therefore, do we now make our most urgent petition that your Honourable House will take the subject of this memorial into your favourable consideration, with the view of providing that, as soon as may be, an entire separation may be made of this District from the Province of Wellington, and that those powers of Local Self-Government may be conferred upon the settlers of Hawke's Bay, which as we trust to have shown, are imperatively called for by considerations justly due to ourselves—to the important District we occupy—and to the nature of those rights which are intended to be secured to us by the Constitution of New-Zealand.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

Here follow 317 Signatures.