

that are likely to accrue, especially to the outlying districts of both Provinces. The Commissioners are fully convinced that the principal cause of the present comparative stagnation of trade in the Province of Southland arises from the crippled state of her finances, and the inability, consequently, of carrying out provision for rapid and easy communication with outlying districts, excepting by a ruinous sacrifice of her landed estate. Her indebtedness to the General Government constantly accumulating, must shortly necessitate a realizing of securities, as it cannot be expected that other provinces will long submit to the course that has been hitherto pursued of relieving special Provinces or Counties of any difficulties they may please to rush into. The Commissioners believe that a reunion of Otago and Southland would relieve the latter from her unenviable position, and so restore confidence as to give a fresh impetus to settlement, trade and commerce, and although, more immediately, would be a burden on Otago, would ultimately, in one united, powerful, and prosperous Province, conduce also to her benefit and welfare. The Commissioners cherish hopes that it would be the first stepping-stone towards one united Middle Island Government. The Commissioners, believing the Government of Otago to be in earnest in their desire to establish a settlement on the West Coast, are of opinion that reunion would facilitate the establishment of a steam coastal service, and that the Bluff being made a regular port of call for such service, would encourage the development of many industries now dormant; this, in its turn, would improve the traffic upon the railways, and render them in their turn a profitable investment. The Commissioners would also point out that by opening up means of communication through some of the districts of Southland, some of the requirements of the outlying districts of Otago would be more speedily and economically met than had those requirements to be met by expenditure within the Province of Otago. That, under the seventh head, the Commissioners would call particular attention to the exclusion from any change of "The Southland Waste Lands Act, 1865," should reunion with Otago be affected, during, at least, the tenure of the pastoral leases issued under its provisions, until the expiry of which any alteration would be incompatible with justice.

The recommendation under clause 11, the Commissioners consider, would naturally suggest itself to the inhabitants of the consolidated Province and intelligence of the united Council. The fundamental principles which should, in the opinion of the Commissioners, dictate the action of a wise Government, are the consideration of the moral and material requirements of the people, economy of expenditure, and efficiency of administration. These requisites can be best obtained by affording every facility to the inhabitants of a district to transact their business from a place which is its geographical centre, and with which their interests are identified.

Some of the special advantages that would be derived from reunion would be the extension, better development, and more economical working of many of what have proved themselves to be, by experience, excellent ordinances and institutions of Otago.

#### *Immigration.*

In connection with this subject, without addition to the cost of working, and in addition to the present provision for keeping up a constant stream of immigrants, or in any future scheme, the Commissioners are of opinion that a stipulation should be entered into that immigrants for the Bluff should be landed there free of additional cost of passage, and that at least every third vessel should make the Bluff an advertised port of call, or oftener, if found necessary. Such a course would afford valuable facilities to the mercantile community in the district for the importation of merchandise, and ensure an equal measure of justice to all outlying districts.

#### *Postal Service.*

The Commissioners are agreed that in any postal scheme entertained by the General Government, in which the mail service is conducted by way of Foveaux Straits, the united Provincial Government, should use their utmost endeavours to secure that the Bluff Harbour should be the first and last port of call; and in entertaining any contract for a coastal service, the Provincial Council should insert the provision that the Bluff should be one of the ports of call.

#### *Roads.*

Though immediately on the consolidation of the Province, that portion of the district formerly comprised within the limits of the present Province of Southland would come under the operation of the Otago Roads Ordinance in regard to the formation of main roads by the Government, and subsidies to the district roads, as presently obtains in the Province of Otago, the Commissioners also contemplate, for a time at least, a portion of the revenues of Otago will be absorbed by the present absolute necessities of Southland.

#### *Education.*

The universally acknowledged success of the Otago scheme of education renders it unnecessary for the Commissioners to enlarge upon the advantages of having that scheme extended to Southland.

JOHN L. GILLIES (Chairman)	}	Otago Commissioners.
WM. H. REYNOLDS		
JAMES SHAND		
WILLIAM JOHNSTON	}	Southland Commissioners.
WALTER H. PEARSON		
JOHN ROSS		

#### MINUTES of COMMISSION in re Union of Otago and Southland.

Council Chambers, Invercargill, 27th September, 1869.

Met this day, the Commissioners appointed by the Provincial Council of Southland, and the Commissioners appointed under resolution of Provincial Council of Otago, dated 11th May, 1869, to consider the terms upon which a reunion of the Provinces of Southland and Otago might be affected.

Present—Messrs W. H. Pearson, John Ross, William Johnson, W. H. Reynolds, James Shand, John L. Gillies.