

The effect of extensive or indiscriminate immigration in the present position of this Province would, in my opinion, induce an excessive competition in the labour market, and have the effect of driving the best and most experienced settlers from the country, to be replaced by immigrants who, from their inexperience of Colonial life and pursuits, must necessarily be less able to contend with the difficulties inseparable from the settlement of a new country.

I am, however, of opinion that by the formation of special settlements upon a limited scale, to be afterwards extended as success might appear to warrant, the permanent settlement of the interior of the Province may be promoted, and a safe and advantageous addition made to our producers and taxpayers.

In this view I am supported by resolutions agreed to by the Provincial Council in their last session, copies of which I have the honor to forward herewith.

In accordance with these resolutions, a Bill was introduced into the General Assembly, and passed into law, intitled "The Nelson Special Settlements Act," empowering me to reserve a block or blocks of land, not exceeding in the whole 100,000 acres, for the purpose of special settlement.

I have since caused a careful examination of the upper and central parts of the Buller Valley to be made by Mr. Brunner, Consulting Surveyor to the Province, in order to fix upon blocks of land most suitable for the experiment; and I enclose herewith a copy of Mr. Brunner's report, with a sketch plan of the district, showing the blocks of land which he recommends for reservation under the Act; two of which, namely, those marked Hampden Block and Matiri Block, comprising an area of about 39,000 acres, I have reserved by proclamation under the power granted by the Act above referred to.

In accordance with the 7th and 8th resolutions of the Provincial Council, I have now to request the assistance of the Colonial Government in the manner provided in the 9th part of "The Immigration and Public Works Act, 1871," viz., the purchase of the reserved blocks, or such portion of them as the Government may decide upon, at the upset price of £1 per acre, and the introduction of suitable immigrants for their gradual occupation; the purchase money to be devoted, as provided in the 8th resolution of the Council, exclusively to the settlement of the land, and to providing work for the occupiers in the construction of roads during the first twelve months after they have been placed upon it.

I regret that the Assembly saw fit to reject the clause in the Special Settlements Bill which left it open to persons already resident in the Colony to participate in the advantages which are offered to immigrants introduced at the expense of the Colony. There is, however, nothing in that Act as it stands to prohibit such an arrangement, and unless the Government consider themselves to be absolutely debarred from doing so by a literal construction of "The Immigration and Public Works Act, 1871," I earnestly hope they will consent to what I believe to be the unanimous wish of the people of this Province in that respect.

In introducing the subject of special settlements to the Provincial Council, in my opening address on the 30th April last, I made use of these words:—"These proposals will be founded mainly upon the provisions of the 61st and succeeding sections of "The Immigration and Public Works Act, 1871;" but with the modification that any land set apart for special settlement shall be open to persons already resident in the Colony upon the same terms as to newly arrived immigrants," and it will be observed that, by their 6th resolution, the Provincial Council adopt the same view.

It would surely be unjust to exclude persons already resident, and in many cases born within the Colony, from facilities in obtaining possession of land; reserving those facilities for the exclusive benefit of immigrants introduced at the public expense, to which the very persons so excluded are called upon to contribute.

Before entering upon the questions of the number and class of immigrants whom it would be advisable to introduce to carry out the proposed scheme of special settlements, I await the decision of the Government upon the application I have herein made for the purchase of the land from Colonial funds under the provision made by the Legislature for that purpose, upon which, in fact, the whole scheme must necessarily depend.

I defer also any suggestions as to the conditions upon which the land should be thrown open to occupation; but I may nevertheless ask your attention to the 3rd, 4th, and 5th resolutions of the Council, and express my general concurrence in their terms.

In the meantime I am only prepared to recommend the introduction of young unmarried women, suitable for domestic servants, to the extent of one hundred per annum, in numbers of about twenty-five every three months.

I enclose a copy of the *Provincial Gazette* (No. 6, 31st January, 1873,) containing the proclamation withdrawing the blocks referred to.

I have, &c.,

OSWALD CURTIS,
Superintendent.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

Enclosure 1 in No. 12.

Copy of RESOLUTIONS passed by the NELSON PROVINCIAL COUNCIL on Tuesday, 11th June, 1872.

1. That, to promote the settlement of the Province, power should be given to the Superintendent to reserve land for special settlements.

2. That such authority extend to not more than 100,000 acres in such place or places, and in such block or blocks, as the Superintendent may from time to time think fit.

3. That the provisions of "The Nelson Crown Lands Leasing Act, 1871," be adopted, except as to land being first offered for sale by auction.

4. That the price of land shall not be less than 5s. nor more than 10s. per acre.

5. That not more than 200 acres shall be allotted to each person.

6. That in the regulations to be framed it shall be left open for persons already resident in the Colony to take part in such settlement.