

1875.

NEW ZEALAND.

IMMIGRATION STATEMENT.

(In Committee of Supply, October 8, 1875.)

BY THE MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION, THE HONORABLE MAJOR ATKINSON.

MR. O'RORKE,—

I may state that it is a matter of very considerable regret to me that the statement on so important a subject as the general condition of immigration should have been delayed to so late a period of the session ; but the truth is that the circumstances of the session have been rather too much for me in this respect. The very important questions which this House has had to consider occupied so very much attention and time that I found it impossible to avail myself of an earlier opportunity.

The Immigration and Public Works scheme, for the first two years or so, as honorable gentlemen will recollect, was not productive of any very large number of immigrants arriving in the colony. The total number of immigrants, however, that have arrived up to the present time is very considerable, the numbers during each year being as follows :—

			Souls.		Adults.
Immigrants landed to June 30, 1872 ...	...	...	693	equal to	613
" " " 1873 ...	...	...	6,810	"	5,827
" " " 1874 ...	...	...	17,513	"	14,310
" " " 1875 ...	...	...	30,043	"	24,758½
" " Sept. 30, " ...	...	...	6,253	"	5,238½
Total to September 30, 1875 ...	...	...	61,322	"	50,747

These have been distributed among the various provinces in the following way :—

			Souls.		Adults.
Auckland ...	...	...	8,783	=	7,326
Taranaki ...	...	...	1,495		1,193
Hawke's Bay ...	...	...	4,886		3,961
Wellington ...	...	...	9,397		7,640
Marlborough ...	...	...	686		609
Nelson ...	...	...	1,211		1,003
Westland ...	...	...	617		525
Canterbury ...	...	...	16,263		13,474
Otago ...	...	...	17,984		15,016
Total ...	...	...	61,322	=	50,747

They may be classified thus :—

9,887 Married men, including widowers.
9,898 Married women, including widows.
13,923 Single men, twelve years and upwards.
9,698 Single women, twelve years and upwards.
15,287 Children, under twelve years.
2,629 Infants, under one year.
61,322 Souls.

Under the free-passage system of immigration, the rule which has generally been followed by the Agent-General has been to limit the granting of such free passages to married men under forty-five years of age, to single men under forty, and to single women under thirty-five years of age—children under twelve not to exceed three in a family. In the event of a suitable family presenting themselves with more children than three, it has been the rule to take cash or promissory notes for the passages of the extra children, and the same course is adopted in the case of persons above the prescribed age and having no special qualifications to recommend them. Since the free-passage system was adopted, the Agent-General has taken in this way from emigrants (by the latest advices) a sum of £5,380 in cash, and promissory notes to the value of £4,700. These promissory notes, both on account of such families and on account of assisted passages, have not been at all a satisfactory arrangement for the colony. I shall speak more particularly on that point presently.

It was a very common impression some months ago—although I think it has been much removed of late—that we were importing immigrants for the benefit of the other colonies. I have seen it stated in Australian papers, and also in papers published in this colony, that a large number of people were being brought out merely for the benefit of the neighbouring colonies. Now, the fact is that, ever since the Immigration and Public Works policy was fairly initiated, we have been gaining not only from the Australian colonies but also from other parts, in addition to the number of immigrants we received from England—free immigrants of our own. The balance in our favour of this immigration over the emigration of last year was 2,573, and in this year the addition to the end of August, 1875, was 2,695. So that we may rest assured that the inducements which New Zealand holds out for immigrants are something more than free passages, and that they are very generally appreciated; and it shows that the stories which have been very current are entirely without foundation. It is, I think, a subject for congratulation that, at the same time that we are importing these large numbers of people, we find a very considerable influx from the neighbouring colonies and from America.

The nationality of the immigrants we have brought in is as follows :—

English	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	34,326
Irish	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	11,974
Scotch	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	9,545
Foreigners	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5,477
								<hr/> 61,322

I have had a statement made out showing as nearly as possible the trades and callings of the immigrants we have introduced; but I shall not on the present occasion trouble the House with it, but will lay it on the table for the information of honorable members. I may say that the statement is not absolutely reliable—in fact it is only approximate—for there is no doubt at all that a very considerable number of persons come out who describe themselves as belonging to a trade which they do not follow. For instance, clerks come out sometimes as agricultural labourers or as following some trade, which to a certain extent shows a want of proper examination in some of our agencies at Home, but which it would be very difficult to entirely suppress.

On the whole, however, I think we have reason to be thoroughly satisfied with the immigrants both physically and morally; and I have taken some pains in ascertaining this, for here also there have been wonderful stories current as to the very bad characters that we were introducing into the colony, and their general unfitness to do anything except live on the charity of others. I have taken some pains to ascertain as nearly as possible what was their state, by inquiry and by personal observation. I have had a return prepared showing the total number of immigrants who have been committed to prison, with their various crimes, up to the 30th August of this year; and the House will bear in mind that we are now speaking of over 60,000 people introduced into the colony. The total number of committals has been 489: of these, 156 are for drunkenness, 41 for petty offences, and 91 are unspecified, their crimes, no doubt, being of a very trivial nature, for all the

graver offences are specified ; so that honorable gentlemen will see that nearly 300 out of the 489 are for merely trifling offences, and the offence of drunkenness, of course, is one which we may very reasonably expect immigrants to fall into, upon their first landing from a voyage. This, to my mind, points to a very satisfactory moral state of the immigrants brought to the colony. Then, with regard to the question of lunatics, I have seen statements in the papers to the effect that the Agent-General had been very careless in this respect, and the Government has been greatly blamed for introducing a large number of lunatics. In one case the writer went on to say that of the patients admitted to a certain asylum 50 per cent. were Government immigrants. I immediately made inquiries, and found that the total number of patients who had been committed during the period to which this writer referred was two, and one of them was a Government immigrant. Thus the writer was absolutely correct in his statement, but the impression that he conveyed to the public was certainly not accurate. The total number of persons who have been committed to lunatic asylums out of the 60,000 brought into the colony is 47, and of these 20 have been discharged, so that the number now in the asylums is 27 out of 60,000 immigrants. Sir, I think that also shows there must have been very considerable care in the selection of immigrants ; and we may fairly assume that out of such a number some would be likely to become lunatics during the voyage, or from circumstances arising in the colony. That, I think, proves there can be no blame fairly attached to the Government on this head.

I regret to have to state that the death-rate of immigrants on board ships has been very unsatisfactory. I may say it has caused me a great deal of uneasiness ; and the Government have endeavoured not only to find out the cause, but to remedy it, and render the voyage really healthy. Honorable gentlemen who came to the colony years ago will remember that it was quite a rare thing for anybody to die in those days. I remember in my own province it was considered a most extraordinary thing for anybody to die ; and although in the early ships all the appliances were very inferior to the present ones, it was also a very rare thing for immigrants or their children to die on the voyage. I am sorry to say that the death-rate, and especially among children, has been exceedingly large ; but the Government have taken steps which I hope will result in it being considerably reduced, although I must confess to the House I have not been able to satisfy my mind as to the real cause of the very numerous deaths. The total number of deaths is 1,244. I have had the deaths classified as nearly as possible in the manner adopted in publishing the vital statistics of the colony. The total number of infants shipped was 2,670, and of these 502 died. The total number of children was 15,879, of whom 1,094 died. The total number of adults, which includes all of twelve years and upwards, was 43,582, of whom 150 died. The average death-rate of infants is 18·8, an enormous proportion, about one-fifth, in a voyage the average duration of which was about three months. The average death-rate of children from one to twelve years was 3·73, and of adults 0·34. The death-rate among children especially was one of the chief reasons why the Government altered the dietary scale, which has much increased the expenses of the voyage ; but I will refer to that more particularly when I speak of the new dietary scale.

Of the total number of immigrants that have arrived, 6,850 were nominated. The nomination system is no doubt the very best we can adopt for introducing people into this country. It is of immense advantage that a new arrival should have friends who can advise and look after him on his first landing ; for no Government officer can possibly assist any stranger in the same way that his friends can. But there would appear to have been great recklessness on the part of those in the colony in nominating their friends ; for, although no less than 32,485 have been nominated, yet up to the present time we have only succeeded in getting 6,850. I have taken some pains to put this matter on a better footing, and I trust that the present arrangements will tend in that direction. The Agent-General is, I believe, thoroughly alive to the great desirability of encouraging this class of immigration, and does, I believe, take every pains to ascertain where the parties reside, and to endeavour to get them to come out if they are fit and proper persons.

The average cost of an immigrant, including all expenses, except that of building the depôts, and without counting as an asset the promissory notes which

we hold, has been up to the present time just under £21 10s. per adult, and about £17 13s. per head.

As I have stated, promissory notes have been taken from immigrants for extra children; and, in some cases, for any member of a family who might be over age, or otherwise considered unsuitable as a free immigrant. Honorable members will also recollect that before we introduced the system of free immigration, promissory notes were taken for part of the passage money of assisted immigrants. The total amount of promissory notes taken by the Government up to the present time is £57,767. I am sorry to say that the total amount collected, notwithstanding that very great efforts have been made, is only £6,100, and there is now outstanding about £51,600 on promissory notes. The Government have therefore set their faces as much as possible against receiving promissory notes, and intend rather to take a much smaller amount in cash, so that there should be nothing hanging over an immigrant on his arrival, but that he should be able to settle down. I think, and the House will agree with me, that it is demoralizing that a man should give a promissory note, and then when he comes out here he should think—as apparently a very large number of these men do think—that he is hardly dealt with because he finds that other men have got out free, and there is always something hanging over him, which must tend to check his usefulness as a citizen, and must tend to injure his morality.

As honorable gentlemen know by the papers laid on the table, the Agent-General, with the advice of Sir Julius Vogel, has entered into a new contract for the introduction of immigrants, and the price per head has been increased. The contract as we have it at present has not been signed, and according to our last advices it was awaiting the return of the Agent-General from the Continent, where he had gone, not being in very good health. The letters received yesterday said that the contract would come into operation in August, but it was not stated whether it had been actually signed or not, so I am not able to supply the House with certain information on the subject. We have been paying hitherto for passage money £14 10s. per statute adult for each immigrant landed, half that price being paid for persons shipped but who died upon the voyage; and under the new arrangement we have to pay £16 per adult, and £9 for children between one and twelve years. Now, although we have been nominally only paying £14 10s., the cost was really over £16, for we had found it necessary, upon the recommendation of the doctors, and also from the death-rate which had occurred, to put other and extra provisions on board, which amounted in round numbers to £1 11s. per head. Thus, though there is an apparent increase, there is practically a slight diminution in the price per adult: but the whole contract is really at a slight advance in price, because children would, as a rule, cost £9 under the new contract, instead of £8 under the old. But the children are provided with a much more liberal scale of diet than formerly. Under the new scale, each child receives fresh bread instead of biscuit, and also one pint of milk daily. I believe, when honorable members consider this arrangement, they will think it a wise one, for it is a great mistake to attempt to cut down the price per head to such a rate that it is impossible to feed the immigrants properly. To my mind it is far better and far cheaper to spend a pound or so more upon the dietary scale than to have men arrive here in a weak state, subject to fever and all sorts of other diseases.

Honorable gentlemen will remember that there was a contract entered into by the Agent-General to introduce a certain number of Scandinavians to the colony. It is the intention of the Government, and probably action has already been taken in that direction, to cancel that contract, it having been found that we can get as many immigrants from England, Ireland, and Scotland as the country may require. Therefore we shall probably have only one or two more shipments of Scandinavians. The number of Scandinavians who have arrived up to the present time is 3,327. In that term I have included persons from all the Continental nations who may have been picked up the various ports where they were collected; and as a whole they have been found to be a very satisfactory class of immigrants. Of course there are a few who have not proved satisfactory immigrants, but, taken as a body, they are quite as good as they were expected to be.

As honorable members would see by the papers laid on the table, considerable differences have arisen between the Agent-General and the Government. The general state of the Agent-General's office was not thought to be quite satisfactory, and the Government last year appointed a gentleman from Canterbury to be Permanent Under Secretary to that department, and he went Home at the same time as Sir Julius Vogel. By papers I have laid on the table, honorable members will see that Sir Julius Vogel gave very excellent directions as to the organization, and laid down general rules for the performance of the various duties in that office; and I have every reason to believe that very great advantage will have resulted from his visit to England, and the re-arrangement of the general affairs of the office by himself and the Agent-General. I trust that all difficulties have now been removed.

The total number of persons who have been induced to come out to the colony under the provisions of the Immigrants Land Act, or rather the number registered under that Act up to the present time, is 798, and the total amount for which the Government is liable under the claims of these persons is £13,860. Actually they have only bought land to the extent of £1,700 at the present time.

There has been published in England during the year a second edition of the Official Handbook, and we are informed that very great good has resulted from the distribution of this book. We hear that it has awakened a very lively interest, not only among the labouring and farming classes, but also among that large class of persons possessing small capital; and many persons of considerable means have also been induced to come out to the colony through their attention having been directed to New Zealand by the Handbook. The return, showing the cost of it, has already been laid on the table of the House. The sum is undoubtedly large; but, considering all the circumstances, I think it will be found that the money has been well invested.

Honorable gentlemen are aware that when this scheme of immigration was first initiated, the Superintendents of the provinces were invited to assist the Government in the location of immigrants; and since they have been arriving in large numbers, the local administration has practically rested with the Superintendents. I must say that since I have had the honor to administer this department, I have received every assistance from those gentlemen. They have, I believe, sincerely endeavoured to carry out the works which they undertook on behalf of the colony; but they have not—and here I may be allowed to express an opinion rather in opposition to what fell from honorable gentlemen in Committee a short time ago—they have not devised, as I think they might reasonably have done, any scheme for settling the immigrants on the land. Now, my own view is quite clear on the matter. I consider that, having undertaken the distribution and management of the immigrants on arrival, the duty of settling them upon the land clearly devolved upon them, and not upon the General Government. My remarks refer to honorable gentlemen generally, especially to the honorable member for Avon, who said the Government had entirely neglected their duty in this matter. I contend that the duty devolved not upon this Government but upon the local Government which undertook the distribution and settlement of these immigrants. I do not altogether agree with those honorable gentlemen who think that nothing has been done in this direction. My own opinion is that a very great deal has been done. I had the pleasure of visiting the Provinces of Canterbury and Otago lately, and I must say that the efforts of the Superintendent of Canterbury to get the people settled about the country in all directions have been very great indeed. I found that he had not only built houses of various descriptions, or rather by grants in aid encouraged the immigrants to build them themselves, but had also devoted a great amount of personal attention to the matter, with the view of getting the people out of town and into the country, where they were sure ultimately to fall upon their legs. Considerable efforts had also been made in the Province of Otago, but not to so great an extent as in Canterbury.

Now, I have no hesitation at all in saying that it is, or will be, clearly the duty of the General Government, if they are going to assume the government of this country in place of the provinces, to provide some means, as I have already stated, by which the people can be systematically settled upon the land, and by which the land may be made valuable by being occupied by persons of small

means. But, as I said before, I altogether deny that there has been any real omission on the part of the General Government up to the present time. The truth is, that in all these matters where there is a divided responsibility, there is certain to be failure to some extent. It must come of necessity, without there being any fault at all; and certainly, as far as my experience goes, there has been every desire, both on the part of the General and Provincial Governments, all through, to do their utmost for those people who have been arriving in the colony in such large numbers. I say, myself, that I think a very great deal depends on the satisfactory settlement of the people. A man who has been one or two years in the colony is in an infinitely better position to take land than if we offer it to him on arrival; and I think he is much more likely to do good for himself than if he had been given land on the day he landed. Therefore I do look with very great confidence to the whole of these people being satisfactorily settled on the land, and really making homes for themselves in the country.

Some attempts, too, have been made in the way of special settlements. The Feilding Settlement, to which my honorable friend the Native Minister referred, cannot of course in any way be regarded as a Government settlement; but I may say that it was a matter of arrangement between the two Governments and the Corporation which has been chiefly instrumental in bringing out the immigrants for that settlement. It would have been quite impossible for the settlement to have succeeded had not the Government rendered it every assistance in its power—and I may add that on many occasions it has given it very material assistance. That settlement is going on fairly, and I believe it will be a success; and I do say that the Government may claim a very considerable amount of credit for the success of that settlement. There are at present, I believe, about 1,200 people resident at Feilding, about 770 of whom have been brought out by the Corporation. There is also the Stewart Settlement at Katikati, the first immigrants for which, as honorable gentlemen know, have just arrived: 280 of these people have gone to the settlement and selected their land. That settlement also, I believe, from the character of the people who have undertaken it, will prove a great success. Attempts have also been made to establish Scandinavian settlements in the Provinces of Hawke's Bay and Wellington; and these, I am glad to say, are progressing satisfactorily, the people displaying every desire to make homes for themselves. Another settlement has been established by my honorable friend the Superintendent of Nelson at Karamea, and reports laid on the table will, I think, convince the House that that attempt will show gratifying results before long. The Superintendent of Westland has formed a settlement at Jackson's Bay, in regard to which the highest expectations are formed, these expectations being justified by the reports laid on the table. In the Karamea Settlement there are 250 people. At Jackson's Bay there are not a large number at present. The last return only shows forty-eight people, but we are expecting a ship shortly, some of the families in which are to be sent there.

Honorable gentlemen will see by the papers laid on the table that Sir Julius Vogel made proposals that we should introduce 25,000 immigrants this year, and intended to revert to promissory notes and assisted passages. The matter was considered by the Government here, and it was thought more advisable to very considerably reduce the number, with a view of extending the balance of the money which this House has appropriated to immigration over a period of two years, and so as to be certain not in any way to run the risk of overdoing the labour market. We therefore determined to continue free passages, to take no promissory notes, and to introduce only 13,000 immigrants during the year. The proportions which we propose to send to the various provinces are as follow:—

IMMIGRATION ORDER FOR YEAR ENDING 30TH APRIL, 1876.

			Ordered.	Despatched.	Remainder.
Auckland	...	...	2,200	1,289½	910½
Taranaki	...	...	600	324½	275½
Hawke's Bay	...	...	1,000	440½	559½
Wellington	...	...	2,000	1,448	552
Marlborough	...	...	400 each	55½	1,144½
Nelson	...	...	
Westland	...	...	
Dunedin	...	...	2,000	1,777½	222½
Invercargill	...	...	1,000	506½	493½
Canterbury	...	...	3,000	1,249½	1,750½

The effect of Sir Julius Vogel having ordered so large a number as 25,000 has been that the order which we subsequently sent of 13,000 will be executed at a very early period during the year, so that the whole 13,000 will soon be in the colony: the last shipment of that number will leave probably before the end of the year. I may state that the Government think it a matter of very great importance that a regular stream of immigration should be kept up, but that we should most carefully avoid introducing more persons than we are sure can find work readily. A small but regular stream of immigration, selected with great care, is what we now want. It is, I think—it certainly is to me—a matter of very great surprise that we have up to the present time succeeded in finding work for the very large numbers that we have introduced. I must confess to the House that I had some little doubt, or rather I had some little anxiety, for the last winter; and it is a matter, I think, for very great rejoicing, that nowhere in the colony has there been any lack, at very high wages, of work during last winter. The honorable member for Dunedin City yesterday wished to read a paper to this House—a resolution come to by some men who call themselves “the unemployed in Dunedin.” Of course, a statement of this sort going abroad, where the real facts would be unknown, would do more or less damage to this colony; and it is desirable that we should state what are the real facts as regards Dunedin. By information which I received of a reliable character, it appears that this meeting was got up by two or three perfectly worthless persons, and was attended by a few very worthless persons, and by a large number of persons who went to see what they called “the fun.” The meeting was very rowdy. That expression, I am informed, correctly describes it. It was so unruly that the reporters left; they did not stop to report the meeting. To show that there has been absolutely no truth in the statement put forth, this is a report which I have received to-day from the Immigration Officer at Dunedin. I will read the whole telegram:—

“I did not consider so-called meeting of unemployed of sufficient importance to report to you. Meeting got up by Grant, McLaren, and Powditch, well-known demagogues in Dunedin. Majority of those at the meeting were not the unemployed; they attended to have some fun. The meeting was so rowdy that the reporters left. The demand for labour can be judged by following facts:—The ‘Wai-mea’ arrived on 18th September, with 267 adults; ‘Invercargill’ on the 30th September, with 377 adults; all are now employed except 26½ adults in the dépôt to-day, who will be at work on Monday.”

Now, Sir, I think we may fairly judge of the worthlessness of the statement put forth. About 600 people—new comers—readily obtained work. After this, will any one credit the statement that in Dunedin men cannot obtain work in the course of a month. It is necessary that we should, as far as possible, contradict these rumours whenever we get an opportunity. Sir, I am sorry to have troubled the House at such length, but the subject is very important. Although it was necessary to quote so many figures and facts, I trust they will be useful to the House. It is necessary to go a little into this matter in order that the House may know really what has been done, and what we propose to do. I trust honorable gentlemen will express their views as to the desirability of the numbers, both for the colony, and also for the various provinces, in order that the Government, if the House does not approve of the course it has taken, may receive some instruction in the matter. Before I sit down, I shall have to ask the Committee for an advance of £50,000 over and above what we proposed to ask. The difference has arisen in this way: with the order we sent Home we said—13,000 to be sent out during this year; and Sir Julius Vogel read it as 13,000 adults, so that we shall really receive during the year about 15,000, and the amount asked is about the difference that it will be necessary to take in order to cover the cost of their introduction. I move, That you leave the chair for the purpose of going into Committee of Supply.

