

that you both have misapprehended the nature of Abolition, and “the consequences which will flow to the people of Otago,” should Centralism become the policy of the colony.

I am persuaded that any one, freed from party or personal feeling, who compares the position of Otago as it is with what it will become under Abolition, can have no difficulty in determining his course of action, and deciding on his political platform.

I find, on perusal of your last letter, that your only answer to the grave charges I made against that political party with which you are now allied, and against the action of the Colonial Government, is a brushing away of these charges by saying “that they seem to you of a *tu quoque* nature, and out of place in this correspondence.” Such a remark makes me hesitate as to the object of the various letters you have addressed to me; and if you think that the breach of faith I pointed out, and the mismanagement of colonial finance, can be set aside in the *tu quoque* manner you adopt, it is evident you altogether misapprehend the sincerity and underrate the intelligence of the people of Otago. You may rest assured that the people understand more of politics and of political history than you seem to realize.

It would appear from your letters, that I dare not even hint at the extravagance and maladministration of the Colonial Government. You, however, are entitled to criticise the action of the people and their representatives, and also, as appears from paragraph six of your letter, to bring sweeping charges against civil servants who have no opportunity of self-defence.

In none of my letters have I written one single word against any General Government officer. My allusion to the cost of the Clutha Railway went to show that all works could be more cheaply constructed under local administration than under government at a distance.

You, however, bring charges of the most grave character against all the eminent engineers the Province of Otago has ever employed. I need scarcely remind you that many of the engineers, and I might add other professional men of ability, who have been employed by the General Government, have been taken from Otago. It appears to me ungenerous, to say the least of it, to allege that the many able and eminent engineers that the province has employed have wanted “competent engineering skill.”

Passing on to the charges you made against the Provincial Government, of sacrificing the landed estate of the province, I can only say you are entirely astray as to your facts. As to this, I would refer you to my letter to the Hon. the Colonial Secretary of the 4th instant, with enclosures, from which it will be seen that the action of the Provincial Executive has been not only strictly in accordance with law, but with good policy. You are, of course, aware that the law admits of land 1,200 feet above sea level being sold for 10s. an acre, with consent of lessee; whereas the action of the Executive would have secured at least 20s. an acre for the same land.

You seem to impute it as a great crime on the part of the Provincial Legislature, that it should dispose of mountain lands for the construction of branch railways. In my opinion, if the whole of the mountain tops could be converted into branch railways to-morrow, instead of being a loss, it would be a vast gain to the province. The latter would be as productive to the State as the former, while there would be the advantage, in as far as Otago is concerned, that its mountain tops would be disposed of for railway construction within its own territory, instead of in the North Island, which will be the practical result of your present policy.

While upon this subject, I must say that it seems somewhat extraordinary that in other parts of this island, under that system of free selection you have so long warmly advocated, vast private estates are being created, and the finest agricultural land alienated from the Crown in large blocks, and no objection raised; while in the only province in New Zealand where any efforts for conserving agricultural land for settlement have been made, fault should have been found with its land administration.

Because the Otago Provincial Government chooses to reserve the agricultural land for settlement on deferred payments, and to sell the hill-tops sooner than let