

IMMIGRATION.

To some extent the impression seemed to prevail that my action at Home respecting immigration was more or less a matter of my own discretion and responsibility. I should like you to let it be placed on record, that my colleagues unreservedly left me to deal with all subjects relating to immigration. In doing so I felt that I was acting for my colleagues, and that it was my duty to be influenced by their views as well as my own; just as if any one of us were dealing with some matter in the colony, consulting from time to time his colleagues. As I was away, you were better able to judge than I could be of the immediate conditions prevailing in the colony, and I willingly acquiesced in the alterations that were urged upon me. But I wish it to be distinctly understood, that whatever I did, I did with the full authority of my colleagues to act.

MY ALLOWANCES.

I come now to a question to which I feel bound to refer, although I do so, as you will believe, with reluctance: the question of my allowances.

When the Cabinet decided on asking me to go to England, it was resolved—as the Cabinet, under the Loan Act, had the right to resolve—that besides the usual travelling allowances I should receive £1,500 as special allowance (*see* Cabinet minute attached). I was also given to understand, that if it were found necessary Parliament should be asked to sanction a larger amount. I explained to my colleagues, without reserve, that whilst I was willing to expend my salary during my absence, I was not willing to go beyond that, and should expect the balance to be defrayed out of travelling or special allowances.

Comment was made in the House upon my applying for so large an advance as £4,000 in June, prior to my going on the Continent. I am sure that those comments would not have been made had the real extent of the advance been understood. Of the £4,000, £800 had actually been paid to Mr. Fox for expenses which he defrayed.

I may say that those expenses included the cost of telegrams to the colony, and also advances to Mr. Fox against his travelling allowance and salary. I am under the impression that the House was not aware I was providing the money either for telegrams to the colony or for the other purposes I have mentioned.

To resume—at the end of June the Government were indebted to me, in excess of advances already accounted for, some £400, besides the special allowance of £1,500, which, as I have already explained, the Cabinet had agreed I should draw. Together these make £1,900, and deducted from the £3,200 left me an advance of only £1,300. I thought it necessary to take this advance, as it was impossible to know to what expense I might be put for cablegrams during my absence.

I may add that under similar circumstances it has been usual for Ministers and Commissioners to obtain advances. I enclose copy of a note from Dr. Featherston on the subject. I have now to represent to you that the £1,500 special allowance will not defray the expenses to which I have been subjected, beyond my salary and travelling allowances: I find that over and above salary and allowances and some £400 to £500 of private means, which may be considered to represent other than current expenditure, a special allowance of about £4,000 will be required to meet the conditions under which I understood I was to go Home. I have, therefore, to ask Ministers, in addition to the special allowance of £1,500, to ask Parliament to authorize a further sum of £2,500, making in all a special allowance of £4,000. I do not pretend to say that I have been economical. I lived in what I considered to be a reasonable manner; and much as I would like to make the colony a present of my services, I do not feel at liberty to do more than allow my salary to go in reduction of the cost to which I was subjected.

BUSINESS AT HOME.

It is, I think, not unnatural that I should refer to the leading subjects I dealt with whilst absent from the colony. I have already referred to Immigration, and I deal with the Loan negotiations in a separate letter. I think the colony has no reason to regret my action with respect to either of those matters. The arrangement I made with the Bank of England is fully explained in another letter. It will, I believe, be the means of enabling New Zealand, as well as other colonies, to save many hundreds of thousands of pounds. As to the Telegraph Cable arrangements (which are explained in a separate communication), having a power, under Statute and Governor's Warrant, to bind the colony to payments in the aggregate of £20,000 a year for thirty-five years, or £700,000 in all; I have only found it necessary to make the colony responsible for £5,000 a year for ten years, or £50,000 in all.

It has been asked what right I had to draw salary and allowances whilst absent owing to illness. I might reply, that I was away on the Continent for less time than other Ministers and Commissioners have on various occasions been; and that two months is not an excessive relief considering the arduous labours which have devolved on me during the years I have held office. But a more substantial answer is, that I did not seek to remain in office. When I found that I was too ill to return, I had to decide between sending to His Excellency a positive resignation, or leaving you at liberty to tender my resignation if and when you thought fit. In adopting the latter course, I thought I should be doing that which would be most acceptable to, and would show most confidence in, my colleagues. Had I sent a positive resignation, I might have forced a break-up of the Government at an inconvenient time; besides that it might appear I was unwilling to be responsible for the action of my colleagues. You decided, before Parliament met, to tender my resignation, and I may say I think you could not have done otherwise. It would be most inconvenient that there should be no Premier in the colony during a Session. His Excellency asked you to form a Government, and I am sure you will bear me out in saying that, without any solicitation or wish expressed on my part, you did me the honor to appoint me Postmaster-General in it. To have refused the position assigned to me would have been in the highest degree ungracious, though I feel myself at liberty to say that had I refused, or had you not made me the offer, I should have been better able to consult my personal interests, besides avoiding the risks of a long journey.