

With respect to the letter of the Chief Harbourmaster, in which allusion is made to certain information having been conveyed to the Government as to a falling off in the depth of water on the bar at Otago Heads, I am to state that no communication has reached the Government on this subject, nor have they any reason to suppose that there has been a diminution in the depth of water there.

I have, &c.,

R. JOHNSON,

Officer in Charge.

The Secretary, Otago Harbour Board, Dunedin.

### No. 20.

The SECRETARY, Otago Harbour Board, to the OFFICER in CHARGE, Marine Department.

SIR,—

Otago Harbour Board Office, Dunedin, 12th June, 1878.

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your favour No. 271-19, 3rd June, 1878, forwarding copy of a report made by Sir John Coode on Dunedin Harbour, and informing the Board that, should it adopt the recommendations made therein, His Excellency the Governor in Council would be recommended to approve of them.

In reply, I am instructed to forward, for the information of the Government, a copy of the questions submitted by the Board to Sir John Coode, and to point out that the only portion of the report that can be regarded as at all relevant as a reply to the Board's queries is that referring to the suggested additional reclamation, and which simply amounts to a confirmation of the Board's plans already sanctioned by His Excellency the Governor in Council.

The Board, while willing to treat with all due respect Sir John Coode's opinion as a marine engineer of high standing and repute on matters affecting the tidal flow and scour, cannot allow him, a mere hurried visitor, to be better qualified than or even as well able to judge of what is the best position for the railway station as the members of the Board, the City Corporation, and the members of the Chamber of Commerce. The Board must therefore demur to his opinion being adopted on that point.

The Board was, on the receipt of the report, strongly of the opinion that an error had crept into it, and that Crawford Street had been written in mistake for Castle Street, as to both the Chairman of the Board and the Chairman of the Works Committee (in presence of the Board's Secretary) he expressed his approval of the "Conference plan" (that referred to as that of 20th February), adopted by the Government Engineers, the representatives and Engineer of the City Corporation, the representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, and the representatives of the Harbour Board, to the extent at least of the proposed provision for railway requirements as set forth on said plan, but stated that he required more time to consider the question of increased reclamation outside of the eastern line thereof and extending to Anderson's Bay; and it was only on the ground of etiquette that it was agreed, after an interview with the Hon. the Attorney-General, that he should forward his interim report, to the effect as above stated, through the Hon. the Minister for Public Works, instead of direct to the Board.

As the Board's Engineer has received a telegram in reply to one sent to him by request from Mr. Blackett, Marine Engineer, stating that Crawford Street, as written, is in accordance with Sir John Coode's explanation to him, the Board cannot help expressing its regret that some explanation of the cause or causes that had the effect of making him change his opinions after leaving Dunedin, and before writing his interim report in Auckland, have not been furnished. One of the principal reasons of the Board consenting to bear its proportion of the expense of his visit to the colony was to enable its members to hear his opinions *vivâ voce*, as well as in writing, when they would have the opportunity and satisfaction of knowing that all necessary information and all phases of the question would be fairly put before him.

The Board must express its extreme dissatisfaction in finding that his views, so freely and frankly expressed when here, with all information before him that he considered necessary for his interim report, should be so modified by that report, as forwarded.

The Board has also felt some surprise that its Engineer has not yet received, through the Marine Engineer's department, an official memorandum, as intimated would be the case by Sir John Coode, for sundry returns and information that he would require for his general report, and which have been got ready as far as he then made known or indicated what he would require.

The Board would further add that it is satisfied the public generally will not approve of the proposed site for the railway station, which virtually involves the closing up of all the streets from Rattray Street to Anderson's Bay Road, and so shutting out all that portion of the city south of Rattray Street from the wharves excepting by a serious detour; nor submit that the work of improving the harbour, so important to the commercial community and to the whole provincial district, should be hindered and curtailed, if not altogether crippled, as it must necessarily be, by the abstraction of such a large portion of the most valuable and available part of the Board's endowment, while a more suitable (though not so valuable) site could be had otherwise.

The Board would remind the Government that it was on the faith of the revenue to be derived from its endowment that it entered into the engagements it has done, and borrowed in the London market, in accordance with law, £250,000 by the direct mortgage of the said endowment.

The Board is of opinion that it would be guilty of the grossest neglect of the best interests of the public should it do otherwise than do all that lies in its power to prevent such a proposal as that indicated by Sir John Coode in regard to the site for the railway station being carried out.

The Board trusts that the Government may see its way clear, without delay, to assent to the "Conference plan," so far as to carry out the proposed provision by it for railway purposes, and to instruct the Marine Engineer to consult with the Board and its Engineer, with a view to some arrangement whereby the present total of reclamation, authorized by the already sanctioned plans, will not be exceeded.

I have, &c.,

JOHN L. GILLIES,

Secretary.

The Officer in Charge, Marine Department.