

"The Chairman of the County Council then saw the Premier in regard to several local matters. He urged the construction of a road to open the two blocks of land lying between the Maunganui Bluff and the Kaihu Valley, now owned by the Crown. This was the best land in the colony, and suitable for small settlements, and would be eagerly taken up if placed on the market. A sum of £2,000 has already been voted by the Government, but this was a mere drop in the bucket. It was explained that some eleven miles of road had already been made, and Mr. Seddon said that land held by the Government and suitable for settlement would be opened up at the earliest opportunity. Mr. Mueller corroborated the Chairman's statement that the block comprised some of the finest land in the colony.

"Business was not concluded until 11 p.m., and then the party—accompanied by Mr. R. Thompson, M.H.R., who rode over from Whangarei—embarked on the steamer 'Durham' for Pahi. The vessel sailed down the Wairoa River, one of the largest in New Zealand, and navigable for nearly a hundred miles, past Aratapu, where several vessels were loading, and into the Kaipara Harbour, where the ocean swell soon made its presence felt. It was just about daylight when the 'Durham' rounded the sandbank which runs to opposite the signal-station, and once more started to thread its way inland in a north-east direction. This estuary is deep and wide, and, with the others in the vicinity, abounds in mullet and fish of every species. The rising sun tinged the cliffs with gold, and up the channel the scene was much prettier than is usual with tidal rivers. The vessel made fast to the Pahi jetty opposite the timber-mill, and during the forenoon the travellers strolled and pulled about, visiting the district.

"Intelligence had arrived that settlers from Matakoho and the neighbourhood were coming down in a launch, and early in the afternoon they had an audience with the Hon. Mr. Seddon in the hotel. The matters touched on were all purely local affairs. The Paparoa settlers drew the Premier's attention to a vote that had been passed for a road between Paparoa and Waikeke. They knew £350 had been passed, but could never get it, and a contract which had been accepted could not be proceeded with. The vote, if not availed of, lapsed at the end of March, and they were very anxious. The Premier pointed out that when the Government had borrowed capital, the money was given immediately after its appropriation, but now they had to wait until the revenue came to hand. He assured the settlers that the vote would not lapse, and was heartily thanked for this good news. They also wished that a policeman might be appointed to the district, as sheep-stealing was very rife, and the settlers were utterly powerless to cope with the nuisance. Mr. Seddon promised to bring the matter under the notice of the proper department, and see what could be done in the direction desired. The deputation also pointed out the excessive railway freights. The steamer proprietors were prepared to make a reduction if the railways would do likewise. Not half of the traffic of the district went by the Helensville Railway, on account of the high rates. It was diverted to the East Coast steamers. Mr. Seddon pointed out that the Railway Commissioners would be up in that direction shortly, and he advised the settlers to interview and discuss the question with them. He quite agreed, himself, that the rates were too high, and he would make strong recommendations to the Commissioners on the subject. (Applause.) The Premier and the Hon. Carroll were entertained at dinner by the settlers, who also gave the party a hearty send-off when the steamer left for Curtis Point.

"A stay was made *en route* to visit the canning establishment of Messrs. Masfield Brothers, and the 'Durham' arrived at her destination early in the afternoon. Horses were waiting to convey the party to Maungatoroto, some six miles distant, where the County Council and a large representation of the settlers of the district were waiting to receive the Prime Minister. All extended a hearty welcome, and the Premier, after a refreshing meal, received deputations. The Council, in reference to the road from the East to West Coast, asked for a grant of £500 to complete the work, and Mr. Seddon promised to inquire and see what could be done. A vote of £650 had been passed (continued the Council) for the Paparoa-Waikeke Road, but the sum of £350 had never been received. Some contracts were being delayed pending some information of this money. Mr. Seddon said he would put the matter before the department when he got to Wellington, but in the meantime he assured them the vote would not lapse. He explained how the Government had to wait until the revenue came to hand. The interviewers heartily thanked the Premier for his kindly assurances, and again expressed the greatest pleasure at seeing him in the district.

"In the cool of early morning the Hon. Mr. Seddon rode over to the estate of Mr. Ford, and was shown over the beautiful farm by that gentleman. It consists of fine land, undulating, well-watered, and tapped by the Otamatea River, a stream navigable at high tide to opposite the place in question. Some four years ago these 2,000 to 3,000 acres of land were chiefly underbush, and had absorbed a very large amount of capital, the failures of the previous owners, in fact, having made everybody else in the vicinity sceptical of the place ever becoming a thriving, remunerative homestead. But the application of labour and co-operation has been attended with totally different results. About four years ago Mr. Ford took over the place, being assisted in his exertions by relatives only, the obligations binding the one to the other being of a moral nature only. Now the land is almost cleared, under grass, and supporting the first flock of sheep north of Auckland. The few hundred sheep at Mr. Ford's arrival have multiplied sixfold, and a healthy stock of cattle is also steadily increasing. The property has been cleared and grassed, fences and stockyards, pens, and shearing-sheds have been erected, the live stock has been fostered; indeed, everything in this record of success has been the result of the exclusive labours of the Ford family.

"Once on the water the run to Port Albert was quickly accomplished, and the settlers were mustered in force to welcome their distinguished visitor. The Premier and party visited the cricket-ground and watched the match for some time, and then proceeded on to Wellsford, where the magnificent vineries of Messrs. Levet and Sons were inspected. In the evening the Premier received deputations in the public hall, the building being crowded. Mr. Shepherd, president of the Agricultural Society, drew attention to the railway freights, which he thought could be reduced,