

On the all important subject of Waste Lands it is necessary for me to enter into fuller explanations. Until the receipt of authority for the Assembly to transfer to the Provincial Legislatures the powers in it vested by the Constitution Act, I am disposed to exercise in the same manner and with the same effect the powers which remain vested in the Governor until the General Assembly shall otherwise direct. I intend that the Provincial Superintendents and Councils shall be virtually enabled to frame and administer regulations for the disposal of lands by sale, lease or depasturing licenses. But inasmuch as the present Superintendents and Councils were elected when the people had no conception that such powers, with regard to the most important of all Colonial subjects, would be conferred upon those authorities, I deem it just and right that the people, in all cases where they shall desire it, should be enabled to exercise afresh their right of choosing a Superintendent and the members of the Provincial Council. By this means, which the Constitution specifically authorizes the Governor to employ when he shall see fit, the intended transfer of powers to the provinces would be made, not to the actual Superintendents and Councils, who are not strictly speaking the provinces, but to the people themselves, being those who are most deeply concerned and interested in this new Provincial Legislation, it is proposed to adopt the most effectual means in each Province of ascertaining whether or not a majority of the electors desire such re-election of the Provincial Authorities. In any case where a majority of the electors shall decide that question in the negative, the transfer of powers will be made to the existing Superintendent and Council. In the meanwhile, regulations will be issued, as soon as possible, for the purpose of setting apart in every district of each province, a considerable proportion, but not less than one-third, of the waste lands, in such manner as to afford the greatest encouragement and facilities to *bona fide* occupying settlers, whether now resident in the Colony, or who may come to it from any other place, and in particular it is intended, first, that the cost of passage incurred by any such persons, whether possessing some capital, or settling in New Zealand as labourers for hire, shall count as purchase money of land, at the current rate of steerage passage from the Mother Country to the Colony; secondly, that such persons shall obtain credit for a term of years for the payment of the purchase money; and thirdly, in order to prevent mere land speculation by settlers of this class, that they shall not obtain a full or transferable title until after actual occupation of the land for a reasonable time. It is also intended that such regulations shall be administered in each Province by a Board of Commissioners to be appointed by the Governor, and to be bound by stringent instructions for securing impartiality, and an entire openness and publicity in all their proceedings.

In the Provinces of Nelson, Wellington, and New Plymouth, there remain unsatisfied claims for compensation in land for losses and sufferings occasioned by the New Zealand Company. That body awarded very ample compensation to the class of resident and absentee purchasers of land from them, but entirely overlooked the working classes, whose peculiar losses and sufferings were made the principal ground-work of those claims to compensation which have already been so fully satisfied. The justice of the claim of the uncompensated in these Provinces, has been more or less recognized by the Imperial Government and the Governor of New Zealand, and the Provincial Government of Wellington, as represented in the Council, engaged, that whenever the waste lands of the Province should be at their disposal, a commission should be appointed to investigate such claims, and award compensation in respect thereof. As it appears hard upon these claimants that compensation to them should be postponed any longer, whilst land in the most valuable situations is being otherwise disposed of, I intend to issue without delay, a commission, or commissions, which will make the requisite inquiries and award a just compensation accordingly in the Provinces where such unsatisfied claims exist.

As general principles, by which I deem it expedient and desirable that the Legislature and Executive should be constantly guided; the following appear to me peculiarly important. First, that the conferring of Legislative power on the Executive should be carefully avoided, as being unconstitutional and contrary to the spirit and genius of free government; secondly, that each Province shall as far as possible be left to govern itself, in respect of all matters affecting its interests singly; and subject generally to the minimum of restriction consistent with the general superintendence of the General Government, nothing being more objectionable for New Zealand than a General Government interfering or meddling with the Provincial authorities in matters of local concern. As a practical instance, I shall be prepared at once to assent to any Law which may be passed by any Provincial Legislature for altering the Electoral Districts for the Provincial elections, and increasing the number of members in the Provincial Council. Thirdly, that no privilege or advantage shall be given to any Province exclusively, but that absolute justice shall, as far as possible, be done to all without distinction, though justice itself may sometimes demand special legislation for a Province in order to meet its peculiar circumstances.