

The following is a list of the Bills transmitted :—

The Appropriation Bill
 The Fencing Bill
 Picton Improvement Extension Bill
 Drainage Bill
 Picton and Wairau Railway Loan Bill.

With regard to the Picton and Wairau Railway Loan Bill, it is, I believe, somewhat irregular to introduce into a Provincial Council such a measure, by way of Bill, before first obtaining the sanction of His Excellency's advisers as to the propriety of such a measure being introduced. His Excellency's advisers, however, being already acquainted with the rapidly increasing importance of the Wairau District, and the disadvantage under which it at present labours, for want of more easy communication with this port, would, I believe, consider any mass of detailed evidence in support of this undertaking superfluous. The amount the Loan Bill proposes to empower the Superintendent to borrow, or raise as provided, is, you will perceive, seventy-five thousand pounds, which sum, on the most competent Engineering authority we have been able to obtain, will not be more than sufficient to defray the cost of constructing a single line of railway the proposed length (twenty-two miles), sufficiently substantial to be capable of supporting engines of moderate weight, which means of locomotion we are advised, with the concurrence of His Excellency and his advisers, to adopt, as being better and more economical, considered with a view to our future requirements, than a lighter line would be, which could only be used for horse traction. His Excellency's advisers are, I believe, fully aware of the importance to this Province of this undertaking. Nature has provided a fine district, containing a large quantity of excellent land, capable of supporting a large population; but there at present exists serious obstacles to its development. The first and most important of which is, its want of a Port in immediate connection with it, it having been dependent hitherto upon the Wairau river for its port, across the entrance of which a bar exists, which being continually altered by the action of the sea in stormy weather renders the entrance, even to small coasting vessels, very precarious. The importance of giving to this Province easy communication with Queen Charlotte's Sound, the merits of which as a harbour are well known to all, is the great and, I may say, the unanimous wish of the settlers of this Province. Independently of the great benefit which this line would confer as a means of general communication with the Port, another incalculable advantage, particularly to the town and agricultural district would be secured. Timber, which is exceedingly scarce in the Wairau District, exists on the proposed route in abundance; inasmuch as the line would, from the Picton terminus, pass, for eight miles, through an excellent bush of several thousands of acres in extent. It being thus a matter of the greatest importance to the welfare of the Province that the proposed work, or some modification of it, should be proceeded with without delay, His Excellency's advisers will, I trust, recommend His Excellency to give his assent to this Bill, by doing which, you may rest assured you will confer the greatest boon on this Province, without any probability of entailing upon it such an incumbrance as would, to any serious extent, even at the outset, cripple its resources. In regard to the latter matter, there may exist doubts in the minds of those who are not intimately acquainted with the extent of our resources. From a careful estimate, however, lately made out, the quantity of land which is available for pastoral and agricultural purposes, remaining still unsold in this Province, I may confidently state is not less than one million of acres. The bulk of this land, I admit, is hilly, and only fit for pastoral purposes, yet still there is in the Pelorus, Kaituna, Waitohi, and other valleys a considerable quantity of excellent timbered land still unsold. Likewise at the Kaikora Peninsula, several thousands of acres of excellent agricultural land, including a township which has been lately laid off, still remain unsold. From these data you will perceive there is every probability that the revenue accruing from the sale of waste lands alone will be amply sufficient to bear any burden which the magnitude of the undertaking might possibly entail upon the Province, as the whole of the land alluded to would most probably be sold within the period over which it has been deemed advisable, the proposed loan should extend. As regards our Customs Revenue, it is at the present comparatively small. A reference to the published statistics will, however, satisfy you that a great portion of the revenue from that source is collected outside the Province. This arises, as you are undoubtedly aware, from the necessity which has hitherto existed of receiving the chief portion of our goods through the hands of the Nelson and Wellington merchants, in which places the duties have been chiefly collected. This great loss of revenue to the Province is clearly attributable to the want of such means of communication as the proposed undertaking when completed will supply. Although evidence might be adduced which would go far to prove that even as a pecuniary speculation this project has merit, not that the receipts on the traffic alone would, for a considerable period, suffice to pay the interest and defray the expenses, yet those receipts, in addition to the extra amount of Customs Revenue which would be secured, as a sure consequence, would be even, at the commencement, almost, if not altogether, sufficient for that purpose. Compared, however, to the first grand object in every country, the occupation and cultivation of the land, these considerations are but trifling. Land in itself has no intrinsic value, its value being chiefly dependent upon its accessibility, and its capability of being made to produce marketable commodities at the least cost. Since, then, there is a limit dependent upon the means of communication, beyond which agricultural operations cannot be carried on with profit, it is undoubtedly the duty of every Government to extend that boundary to the utmost, by giving every facility compatible with its resources, to the transition of goods and produce to and from port. The Wairau Plain may be cited as a case in point. Cut off from a port to which vessels of a sea-going character can enter, and the hopelessness of being able to compete in other markets with Districts more favourably situated, has hitherto acted as a serious check to its advancement, and consequent interest. To bring into cultivation, and consequently to give a high value to the thousands of acres of ex-