

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE AGENT-GENERAL.

No. 1.

Dr. FEATHERSTON to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

(No. 345.) 7, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.,
 27th June, 1872.

SIR,— I have the honor to transmit to you copies of reports by the Rev. P. Barclay and Messrs. Birch and Seaton, of their operations in connection with emigration from Scotland.

I have, &c.,

I. E. FEATHERSTON,
 Agent-General.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington, New Zealand.

Enclosure in No. 1.

Mr. T. BIRCH to Dr. FEATHERSTON.

SIR,—

Aberdeen, 17th June, 1872.

Mr. Morrison writes me that you wish me to give in to you some report of my proceedings. Had the questions which you wish me to state my opinion upon been put categorically, the result might be more satisfactory. As it is, I apprehend your desire is to obtain my experience of how the scheme of emigration under the present system works. It would be impossible to definitely state how the scheme may ultimately work, but, from my three months' experience, I wish the organization had been more complete, so far as the rural districts in Scotland are concerned. I have visited Berwickshire, Roxburghshire, and Galloway, in the south portions of Ross-shire, and Easter Ross in the north; have delivered addresses, and, must say, been well supported by the clergy and the Press. I have also recommended to the Agent-General, for his ratification, the appointment of suitable local agents in various places I have visited; but notwithstanding the apparent desire on the part of many to emigrate to New Zealand, the attraction in the shape of free grants of land and free passages offered by the Canadian Government, is a most serious drawback to the success of the scheme; and although the terms offered by the Government of New Zealand are most liberal, yet in many cases, where there are large families, the paying even of the small sum of one pound per adult is a serious consideration, and an obstacle, with the necessary outfit for the voyage in view. I would therefore recommend that all emigrants who may be eligible, should be placed on the same footing here as single women. I have also to state that, during my peregrinations in Ross-shire, I visited the town of Cromarty, where most of the population are fishermen, who are very industrious, but very poor. I had interviews with several of them, who are only too anxious to emigrate, but their calling is of such a character that, were they to be, say, located on Stewart's Island, houses to shelter them and boats to ply their trade with would be necessary. Now, as these arrangements would require a considerable outlay of money, I did not consider myself justified, without some further information or authority, to induce those families to emigrate at present.

The whole subject is worth the attention of Government, as the same rule will doubtless apply to the inhabitants of the Shetland Islands, but as I mean visiting those Islands this week, I will be more able soon to report on their social position. I would respectfully draw the attention of the Agent-General to the present unsatisfactory condition in which I am placed for want of a central office, where letters may be addressed to me in Scotland. Letters from numerous correspondents are circulated all over the country, much to my own chagrin and to the serious disappointment of many. I would recommend, under these circumstances, that central offices be allotted to each gentleman whom the Government may appoint as agent: for example, one in Inverness, to embrace that shire, Ross-shire, and Easter Ross, with occasional visits by the agents to Sutherlandshire, and so on throughout Scotland; indeed the same rule would apply to all other parts. (I have already touched in a former letter on these matters, but without any cognizance being taken of my remarks.) I should further remark that when an application form is filled in by an intending emigrant, discretionary power should be given to the agent on the spot, instead of sending the form to London, causing much delay and often disappointment; for who is more competent to judge of the qualifications of the person or persons applying for an assisted passage than he who doubtless makes all necessary inquiry as to the habits, health, and character of the applicants? I would most strenuously recommend that all agents have this power granted them. I already notified to you that the Border farm-servants are engaged in the first week of March, by the year, and as I did not arrive in Britain until the 9th of last month, my mission there was not so successful as it would otherwise have been. I have sowed the seed, however, wherever I have been, and I have great hopes that we may reap an abundant harvest of people of the right stamp. I would suggest that an agent should visit Berwick and Roxburghshire during the months of December on to March, and that his head office should be in Kelso. I believe that much good would result from this course: it would give the agricultural labourers time to think over the liberal offers made to them by the New Zealand Government. If there is any other matter you wish information upon within my knowledge, I will supply it.

In conclusion, it is to be hoped that ere long the question of remuneration will be satisfactorily settled, as at present, whatever may be thought by the Agent-General, the labourer is worthy of his hire.

I have, &c.,

The Agent-General for New Zealand.

THOMAS BIRCH.