

REPORT.

To His Excellency Sir HERCULES GEORGE ROBERT ROBINSON, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Colony of New Zealand and its Dependencies, and Vice-Admiral of the same.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Commissioners appointed by your Excellency on the 10th March “for the purpose of inquiring into the constitution and organization of the Civil Service of New Zealand, and to consider by what means the cost of such Service may be reduced without impairing or lessening the efficiency thereof, and whether the said Service ought in any manner to be reorganized or reconstituted, having due regard to such efficiency as aforesaid,” have the honor to submit the following report to your Excellency :—

It will not be supposed by any one who is capable of forming an idea of the magnitude of the Civil Service of New Zealand that your Commissioners have been able, in a few weeks, to procure all the information necessary to enable them to report on all the departments of that Service, far less to recommend any complete system of reorganization or reconstruction. We are conscious of having left some large and important branches of the Service altogether uninvestigated, of having inquired very superficially into others, and of having gone exhaustively into none; but, believing that one great object of our appointment was to collect evidence and obtain information useful to the Government and to the Legislature during the present session, and that would enable us to make some recommendations for immediate reduction in the cost of a Service which is consuming so large a portion of the revenue of the colony at a time of great trial and depression, we now submit to your Excellency the result of our inquiries so far as we have been able to prosecute them.

The extended power of investigation which your Excellency was pleased to confer upon us, the wide range of our instructions, and the freedom from all directions or control with which we have been left to act, has placed upon us the entire responsibility of choosing our own course, of deciding upon the manner in which our investigations should be conducted, and of selecting the departments to which our attention should be first or principally directed. We considered ourselves at liberty to put an extended construction on the term “Civil Service;” and we have thought it desirable, for our present purpose, to adopt such an interpretation of that term as to include all persons employed and paid for their services by the Government, comprising no less than 10,853 individuals.

It soon became evident to us that, in order to render our inquiry of real service to the colony, we should be compelled to prosecute it at places outside the circle of daily inspection by Ministers. Therefore, in conducting our preliminary investigations at Wellington we chiefly endeavoured to obtain such general information from the heads of departments as we thought likely to assist us in our researches elsewhere.

RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

At an early stage of our inquiry we came to the conclusion that the Railway Department was the one which most urgently demanded reform, and in which the greatest amount of useless expenditure existed. We therefore determined that it should be the department which we would most strictly investigate during the limited time at our disposal before the meeting of Parliament, at whatever sacrifice of attention to other departments, where any mismanagement would involve less serious consequences to the colony.