

1892.

NEW ZEALAND.

“GENERAL” BOOTH’S OVER-SEA COLONY

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO).

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives, dated 28th July, 1892.

Ordered, “That there be laid before this House a return of all letters and telegrams which have passed between the Government and the Agent-General, “General” Booth, or other persons, in reference to “General” Booth’s over-sea colony.”—(Mr. MOORE.)

No. 1.

MEMORANDUM for the Hon. the PREMIER.

I HAD an interview with “General” Booth on the morning after his lecture on “Darkest England.” I gave him particulars of the system which exists in New Zealand under Act of Parliament and Orders in Council for the establishment of farm-homestead and village-homestead settlements. I promised that the Minister of Lands would supply him with the necessary papers to explain the system in detail, and I have written a memorandum for his guidance to the same effect, embodying also the views which I have formed of the conditions necessary to secure success.

I suggest that the following papers be sent: First, the last report of the Crown Land Department; second, Mr. March’s paper read at Christchurch 12th June, 1891; third, the regulations which appeared in the *Gazette* of the 12th March, 1891; fourth, Mr. Copley’s report on New Zealand village settlements; fifth, a copy of the Land Act of 1885.

In my opinion it is highly desirable that the Government should give General Booth an opportunity of putting his scheme to a practical test. The main features of it do not materially differ from those of the village-settlement system. If it should prove a failure, the worst that can happen is that the New Zealand Government will have incurred some expenditure in road-making, perhaps in building a school, and will have to set against that and any advances which may be made their land in a more or less improved condition.

The eyes of England and the whole Empire are on the attempt which General Booth is making to solve the hitherto insoluble problem of England’s superfluous and unemployed population. The fact that the scheme is to be tried in New Zealand will direct the attention of the whole world to that colony, and the attempt to be made there. Its progress will be watched and reported upon by the press, both English and colonial, and public attention will be favourably drawn to New Zealand as a field for settlement. The Salvation Army itself forms no unimportant body of possible colonists.

I think that the Government should stipulate for two conditions in granting any exceptional facilities to the Salvation Army: (1.) That the first batch of emigrants shall have first undergone some probation on the farm-colony in England, and have proved that they are physically able and willing to enter upon the business of land cultivation and settlement. (2.) That a guarantee should be given that, to the best knowledge and belief of the officers most capable of judging in the Army, none of those first sent have been convicted criminals; and that the widest possible publicity should be given to that undertaking.

I think, further, that the settlement should consist of persons chosen from all ranks of the Army, and that the system of discipline should be observed in the settlement as completely as it is in the Army in cities. If General Booth is ready to comply with these requirements, I suggest that the Government should inform him that they will submit proposals to Parliament to set aside a block of 5,000 acres of land in a bush country, to be selected and approved by some person on behalf of General Booth; that they should, at the same time, undertake not to throw open for sale or selection for a limited period of years a further area of 5,000 acres adjoining, which the Army might take up within the specified time. I suggest that, in lieu of a rental of 5 per cent. on the value of the land, a peppercorn rent be exacted for the first thirty years.