

Southland Times 8 Feb 1868
John Morrison to bring immigrants directly to Bluff

The scarcity of labour we have of late remarked upon is increasing to an extent that promises to be productive of very serious injury to farming and other interests. From all quarters we hear of the difficulty of obtaining men to carry on pressing work in the field and on the roads. Yet, the wages offered are good - better probably than in any other part of the colony; and there is, as far as it is possible to speak with certainty on a matter so liable to be affected by unforeseen circumstances, every appearance of the demand being well maintained. We need not now attempt to deal with the abstract questions of the importance or desirability of keeping up a constant stream of immigration. Both have been definitely affirmed by public opinion. Our business is with the plain fact that there is a large amount of work to be done, and plenty of people ready to pay a fair money equivalent for it. By-and-by, no doubt, when the Government shall have perfected its immigration scheme, two or three vessels will be laid on with immigrants from the home country; but, in the meantime, the Province is likely to suffer an actual loss for want of hands to gather the harvest that, notwithstanding the unfavourable season, is gradually ripening. That one or two hundred able-bodied men would find immediate employment we can safely assert; and, judging by the activity with which the engineering survey of the Northern Railway has been carried on, there is every probability that by the time harvest is over, any surplus labor could be profitably engaged in the work of completing the line. Under these circumstances, we think the Government would be justified in devoting some portion of the money voted by the Provincial Council for immigration (£4000) to the purpose of defraying the passage money of, say, one hundred laborers from Auckland. We have, on a previous occasion, advocated this course, and feel confident that it would be favourably regarded by the public. It may be repeated that latest accounts confirm what has been already told respecting the prevalent depression in Auckland. Hundreds of men, it is said, are going about, anxious to get work, and too poor to leave in search of it in the other provinces.

Since the above was written, we have learned that the local Government has decided to authorise Mr Morrison (its London agent, now on a visit to this province) to lay on, direct for the Bluff, vessels chartered to convey cargo, passengers, and assisted immigrants - in fact to use the familiar term, "to resume assisted immigration." The first vessel, it is expected, will leave England in July. Mr Morrison has been on a tour of inspection through this province, and will be in the best position to afford information to those desirous of ascertaining somewhat of the resources and prospects of Southland. It may be not altogether out of place to point out the desirability of merchants and others taking advantage of the opportunity of obtaining direct importations of goods. This would go far to induce the establishment of a line of regular traders to the Bluff, and prove beneficial by increasing the revenue, and diminishing the selling price of most articles of ordinary use.