

Comments about New Zealand Company selected emigrants

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William Wakefield to the New Zealand Company Secretary - Wellington 25 Apr 1841

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Sir, I regret to be obliged to bring under the notice of the Court of Directors the very great departure from the rules which have hitherto guided the selection of the emigrants and from one of the principles of the system upon which this colony has been founded. With the exception of those brought from Scotland in the 'Blenheim' the immigrants in the last five ships have not been at all equal in value to the previous arrivals. I have noticed before, the inferiority of those in the 'London' and its cause. In the 'Slains Castle' and 'Lady Nugent' the instance of bad selection have been more striking. The Emigration Register is no guide as to the age of the parties. In many cases decrepit persons of between fifty and sixty years of age with no counterbalancing advantages of a healthy growing family appear as under thirty, by which the Court is deceived as to the class of persons sent hither and in numerous instances, crippled, insane and bedridden paupers have been landed here only to be an incumbrance and a cost to the Company's Infirmary. The enclosed table will bear out this assertion.

As connected with this subject I beg to forward to you the accompanying remonstrance on the part of a large portion of the emigrants by the 'Lady Nugent'. I have investigated the charges contained in it and making allowance for the irritation produced by the long confinement of the voyage and for the unsatisfied nature of objects of gratuitous support I cannot but think that most of their complaints are well founded, particularly with regard to deficiencies of many things promised in the contract. The necessity of the vessel putting into Hobart Town for water is alone sufficient to prove that the "extra stores" of the ship, forty or fifty tons of which have been landed for sale here, took the place of what was essential for the well being of the emigrants. The shameless intercourse between the crews and the unmarried females, in the 'Slains Castle' and 'Lady Nugent' especially (productive in many instances to the Colony) calls for the utmost precautions and injunctions for the future as guarantees against the annoyance of the families of the cabin passengers and the introduction of idleness and disease into the Colony. I am, Sir, Your most obedient servant, W. Wakefield

Enclosed Table

[Name of Emigrant, Age, Name of Ship, Remarks]

Jane Whittaker, 24yrs, 'Martha Ridgway', Under treatment for insanity for which disease she had been treated several times in England.

Mrs Giddins, 38yrs, 'London', Four years in hospitals in England for an incurable disease of which she died about a month after her arrival.

Mrs Susans, 40yrs, 'London', Suffering under the same disease (prolapses uteri et ani) died a fortnight after arrival.

Elizabeth Goodwin, 50yrs, 'Slains Castle', a worn out old woman

Eleanor Harris, 21yrs, 'Slains Castle' An invalid since childhood – had the Surgeon's cabin all the voyage but not likely to recover.

James Taylor, 21yrs, 'Martha Ridgway', a wooden leg

Mary Mummery, 23yrs, 'Lady Nugent', embarked in a diseased state – now salivated &c

Sarah Schmidt, 24yrs, 'Slains Castle', blind

Martha Schmidt, 20yrs, 'Slains Castle', an ideot

Protest of Immigrants per 'Lady Nugent' – signed by 44 Emigrants on board March 1841
<https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2214333606/view>

Respected Sir, We the undersigned Emigrants on board of the 'Lady Nugent' Captain Santry from London, respectfully address to you the Agent here for the New Zealand Company the following statement of the grievances experienced by us on the voyage out, and which we do confidently, though most reluctantly.

1st. Lamps properly secured were not kept burning between decks but all were put out at 9 o'clock – after 12th December we were without oil altogether having had nothing but slush (Cook's refuse) which could with much difficulty be so secured as to prevent accident by fire.

2nd The numbers put into each berth were very much beyond those allowed by the Company's regulations.

3rd That the space for our luggage was not kept apart from the general cargo. The luggage of many of us being stowed away in the Holds, intermixed with the water casks, meat and other articles – which had all to be frequently moved about to be got at. This and the running over of the hose, when the empty casks were filling with salt water, caused much damage to our great loss as can easily be shewn.

4th Our luggage was only taken up from the Hold twice during the voyage and parts particularly wanted for use on packing, refused to be so, tho' many of us wished and asked for it.

5th Many of the provisions and stores were not calculated for more than 2½ months consumption, and the water about 3 – we were put on short allowance after passing the Cape and when we providentially arrived at Hobart Town had on board only half a day's allowance. It is thought the Casks had not been charred as the water turned out so bad.

6th Though Monday was the day fixed on for serving out the weekly rations it was frequently Tuesday and Wednesday till we received them (Mr Norris who gave them out having also to attend to his duties on board). During the latter part of the voyage many articles were withdrawn, wholly or partly without any proper substitute being provided. Such as particularly Suet 9th February nothing in its place. Rice half allowance from 22nd February. Raisins half allowance for 3 weeks from 25th January and one third after 15th February and nothing given instead of the deficiencies. From 11th January for five weeks half allowance of sugar served and rum substituted – with the quantity of the Beef served out we had very strong reason to complain – sometimes with the quantity of both it and the pork.

7th The impropriety of mixing up and using the Stores &c promiscuously. These were separately marked "Cuddy Stores", "Ships Stores" and "Emigrant Stores". The latter however were not served out to their proper owners, as the best pieces were picked out for the Cuddy, the next for the sailors and there then remained for us the very refuse.

8th During the 7 days we lay off Hobart Town each adult received only 1lb bread 1½ fresh meat and 1½ potatoes very few were allowed to go on shore without finding or giving security to return on board – the Sugar since served out is most wretched.

9th Though the stated quantity of Medical Comforts was understood to be on board, till very lately little wine or fesh meat were given out, tho' much required and frequently asked for most earnestly by Parents for their children 16 of whom have died. No Poultry and almost no Brandy. The women giving suck had no Porter for several weeks and latterly never or full pint sometimes sour Ale altho' Porter was on board.

10th Frequently no Medicines could be procured even of the most common kinds.

11th No Filterers, flour scales & weights & swing stoves, or a sufficient supply of brooms, deck scrapers &c for the cleanliness of the ship have been provided.

12th The Number of Emigrants is 227. A Schoolmaster was understood to be appointed viz Mr Finnamore but his services were entirely taken up as Surgeon's Assistant and the children (above 100) received no education whatever.

13th Though the weather was generally fine on the voyage the Passenger were not ordered to be on deck a part of each day nor the bedding to be exposed on deck to allow proper ventilation. Opposition, rather, was made to the bedding being so exposed it being sometimes thrown overboard. Not till very lately were regular visits made by the Captain and Surgeon as to cleanliness.

14th The rations of a man and his wife having been stopped during nearly all the voyage without just cause.

15th The conduct used towards Mr Bevan with regard to both his wife & son who died at separate times was the subject of much disapprobation and hurtful to the feelings of all on board.

16th In short the New Zealand Company regulations have scarcely at all been attended to and the health comfort and morals of the Emigrants nearly entirely neglected. The general want of attention to the sick particularly their being frequently refused nourishment beyond mere rations and the children wine &c &c especially for the first half of the voyage may however be chiefly noticed.

17th The utter neglect of proper protection during the night to the unmarried females may be prominently brought forward.

Wishing every success to the New Zealand Company and with best respects trusting you will give the above due attention for the public welfare and that you will allow a deputation to wait on you to explain farther if necessary.

Signed by: (x) = his mark

George Baker	Robert Fairweather	Edward Prince
George Beachen	Robert Fill (x)	Alfred Robertson
George Bevan	James Futter	George Robertson
Thomas Bevan	Joseph Henry Gillard	Robert Robinson
David Bowman	David Johnston	William Seear
Peter Bruce	Edwin Jones	James Sellar
James Brunger (x)	John Kilmister	David Smith
George Colier	Edward Martin	James Smith (x)
John Colier	Robert Martin	John Southee
James Dodds	David McHardie	John Studley
Thomas Dodds	Alexander Milne	Ezekiel Thorby
Robert Duncan	William S. Milne	Peter D. Watt
Anthony Dunlop	Charles Mummery (x)	John Watterson
Alexander Duthie	James Phelps	James Wilkie
Thomas Evans	John Pimble	