

PETITION OF SETTLERS OF HAWKE'S BAY.

TO THE HONORABLE THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF NEW ZEALAND, IN
PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

The Petition of the undersigned, RESIDENTS in the Province of Hawke's Bay,

HUMBLY SHEWETH,—

That, as announced in the *Hawke's Bay Herald* of 21st July, the financial affairs of this Province have come to a crisis, the Treasury being unequal to the demands upon it, and a virtual suspension of payments having accordingly taken place.

That, considering the very large amounts received from Land sales, the Provincial Chest, instead of being empty, ought, under prudent management, to have been in a most flourishing condition.

That the present state of matters has been entirely brought about by the grossest mismanagement, and the neglect of the most ordinary rules of financial administration.

That works of great magnitude have been undertaken in all directions without due consideration or careful calculation of the cost. That these have been in most instances so hurriedly laid off, and so imperfectly superintended in their execution, that whilst vast and incredible sums have been sunk in them, the communications throughout the District are, at the present moment, actually in a worse state than they were before the present Provincial Institutions came into operation, and this is the more grievous as there now appears no probability of funds being available to put them even in a passable condition.

That, without having first obtained the advice of a competent Engineer experienced in such undertakings, a very large amount has been already spent in purchasing a Steam Dredge with the object of deepening and improving the Harbour at Napier; and extensive works are about to be commenced there which, while not urgently required for the wants of the District, will, it is generally believed, be ruinous in their unknown expense, and unsatisfactory in their result.

That, in addition to the reckless and inconsiderate expenditure on Public Works, a great multiplication of unnecessary offices, and an extravagant increase of salaries, has gradually taken place, to an extent indeed now quite amazing to every one, and which imposes on this small Province greater burthens than it can possibly bear.

That, whatever may be pretended to the contrary, it is notorious to those who know the country that nearly the whole of the available 10s. land has passed away from the Public Domain; consequently the future Land Fund must be derived chiefly from the sale of 5s. land, which from its nature and position can only be expected to yield a small and precarious annual amount. The blocks of land reserved and laid out at great expense as Townships, have been precipitately brought into the market, and forced off without securing their ostensible object, a considerable portion having fallen into the hands of mere speculators in the absence of *bona fide* settlers.

That, having little or no direct trade, our Customs Receipts are very trifling and there is not much prospect of a material increase.

That the promises and professions of the parties composing the present Government, and their most active supporters, as to economical and other reforms, have been totally at variance with their acts since they obtained the command of the resources of the Province, and your Petitioners believe, that unless some very great reduction of expenditure in the Staff of the different Departments be immediately carried into effect, the whole available funds will be swallowed up, leaving no means of completing the roads already begun, which are indispensable to the development and improvement of the country.

That your Petitioners believe from experience of its working, that the present Provincial System, even as modified by the New Provinces Act, is not a form of Government suited to the circumstances of the Country. They would prefer to see all Legislation undertaken by the General Assembly with the division of the Country into Counties, each County having full powers of Local administration over a certain portion of the Land Fund and Territorial Revenue accruing within its bounds.

That your Petitioners believe that there are no real difficulties in the working of such a system but what can be overcome, as they have been elsewhere.

May it therefore please your Honorable House to appoint a Committee of enquiry, to examine and report on the past proceedings and present position of the affairs of the Province with a view to a radical change, provided,—as alleged by your Petitioners, and which they desire an opportunity of proving—the present System has failed to fulfil the just expectations of many of the settlers, but has on the contrary brought the affairs of the Province to suspension and impending ruin.

And your Petitioners will ever Pray.

Purvis Russell,
H. R. Russell,
James Avison,

Thomas Malcolm Milne,
David S. Fleming,
Alexander Grant,