

PETITION OF THE MINERS AND RESIDENTS ON THE  
WAKATIP GOLD-FIELDS, PROVINCE OF OTAGO.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY SIR GEORGE GREY, GOVERNOR AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE  
COLONY OF NEW ZEALAND, AND TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN ASSEMBLY.

The Petition of the undersigned Miners and Residents on the Wakatip Gold-Fields, in the  
Province of Otago,

HUMBLY SHEWETH—

That your Petitioners are constrained to bring under the notice of your Excellency and the  
Honorable House the following :—

The Provincial Government of Otago derive from the Gold-Fields of that Province about  
two-thirds of the whole Provincial revenue.

Your Petitioners, when these fields were first opened, were contented to pay high prices for  
the necessaries of life, in respect that the Provincial Government had had no opportunity of  
opening up communication, so as to permit the importation of merchandise to the fields, and  
waited with patience the action of the Provincial Government. When your Petitioners saw,  
however, that all the action likely to be taken by the Provincial Government was to enforce the  
collection of revenue, they remonstrated in a respectful Petition addressed to His Honor the  
Superintendent, and called his attention to the hardships under which they laboured. Your  
Petitioners called attention to the fact that these fields had been left for many months with only  
one Warder, who could not possibly perform all the duties required—that the diggers from the  
utmost corner of the field had to come to Queenstown to have settled every trivial dispute, dis-  
tances varying from four to fifty miles—that these journeys were for the most part over a country  
where even the most careful walking is attended with a certain amount of personal danger, and  
always attended with great fatigue and loss of time—that a comparatively small sum would suffice  
to furnish, at least, pack tracks to the various almost inaccessible diggings, would reduce the price  
of provisions and would be the means of saving the loss of many valuable horses, as many of these  
are killed by falling over precipices &c., while travelling the fields with provisions and other  
necessaries—that the mates of miners suffering from sickness were unable, from the want of roads,  
to bring down their brethren for medical advice, and that many diggers had died without anything  
in the shape of medical attendance to alleviate their pains. Your Petitioners also called the  
attention of His Honor to the fact of the camp having been removed from Queenstown to Frank-  
ton, thus aggravating in a tenfold degree the evils already attending the journeyings to and fro.  
This Petition was couched in respectful, though firm language, and your Petitioners disclaim  
having had any intention of being disrespectful to His Honor. His Honor, however, declared that  
it was disrespectful, and declined to receive it. Action was however taken upon it to a certain  
extent, inasmuch as the camp was moved back to Queenstown, and the sum of one thousand six  
hundred pounds given for the formation of a road up the Shotover.

That your Petitioners consider the sum of one thousand six hundred pounds thus given was  
entirely inadequate, and indeed it was a burlesque; and at the present moment your Petitioners  
are still without proper access to the various diggings. The result has been that during the late  
disastrous season, many miners have expended their all, owing to the high price of provisions.  
These prices were increased one hundred-fold by the expense of carriage.

Your Petitioners beg further to state to his Excellency and the Honorable House, that a motion  
was brought before the Provincial Council by one of the Mining Representatives, stating that  
your Petitioners were inadequately represented in the Council, and urging the Chamber to increase  
the number of these Representatives—that while the diggings, with a population of 24,000, are  
represented by three members only, the town of Dunedin is represented by double that number,  
and that the pastoral interest of Wakatip, with only five names on the electoral roll, has one  
member for itself. This motion was negatived, on the ostensible ground that the miners are a  
“wandering population.” Your Petitioners deny the assertion that the miners are a wandering  
population, and are ready to settle upon the lands, if the Provincial Government will open them  
up. The keeping of these lands closed has been the cause of disease in the shape of scurvy, and  
deaths thereby have been numerous.

That your Petitioners humbly beg to bring further under the notice of His Excellency and  
the Honorable House, that the management of the Gold-fields has been so radically bad as justly  
to lead to discontent. The powers delegated to His Honor the Superintendent, and which he