

P E T I T I O N

OF

INHABITANTS OF OAMARU:

PRAYING THAT A PORTION OF THE LAND FUND OF DISTRICTS OF THE MIDDLE
ISLAND MAY BE ADMINISTERED BY LOCAL BOARDS.

PRESENTED 24TH JULY, AND ORDERED TO BE PRINTED 14TH AUGUST, 1866.

(*Mr. Campbell.*)

WELLINGTON.

—
1866.

PETITION OF THE INHABITANTS OF OAMARU, OTAGO.

Unto the Honourable the Members of the House of Representatives of the Colony
of New Zealand, in Session assembled.

This Petition of the undersigned, Inhabitants of the Town and District of Oamaru, in the Province
of Otago,

HUMBLY SHEWETH,—

That your Petitioners are true and loyal subjects of Her Majesty, and that they are actuated by a sincere desire to promote the prosperity and advancement of the Colony, and the wise administration of its affairs.

That a Petition from the inhabitants of this district was submitted to your Honourable House during its last Session, detailing the grievances under which they had laboured, and had long striven to overcome, and praying for “the removal of the present Provincial Government, and the establishment of one system for the Middle Island, including Local Boards for the administration of the details of Government, with power over a certain portion of the Land Fund; and that pending the completion of these necessary alterations, the Provincial Government should be restrained from squandering the Land Fund on useless or extravagant works.”

That your Petitioners deeply lament that the Session was allowed to close without some action being taken to remedy the evils complained of and commented on in that Petition; and they feel constrained to again direct the attention of your Honourable House to a matter which they, with all deference, submit is one which demands the most serious consideration and prompt attention on the part of the General Government.

That your Petitioners are more than ever convinced of the necessity for a radical change in the Provincial Government system, and after long and anxious consideration are of opinion that to get rid of the enormous burden presently pressing on the country, to overcome the paralyzing influence of a reckless squandering of public funds, and to secure for each district a fair and just proportion of its revenue, a scheme such as that proposed in the “Oamaru Petition” of last year, and above referred to, is the only one calculated to effect those much to be desired results.

That this district is rapidly rising into preeminence as being especially adapted for the growth of cereals, and that settlement is clogged and great hardship inflicted on those who have been induced to purchase and improve land, through the non-formation of proper roads, the erection of bridges, and other necessary public works. Despite all this, vast sums have been and are being expended on utterly useless and grossly extravagant public works, to the great injustice to and detriment of this and other districts contributing the revenue. In support of this allegation, from the Statistical Appendix to this Petition it will be seen that out of a total revenue of £68,891 16s. 6d. derived from the sale of rural land, from July, 1865, to February, 1866, inclusive, a sum of not less than £53,304 was contributed by the Oamaru District alone.

That your Petitioners view with apprehension and mistrust the application by the Provincial Government of Otago for power to construct a Railway, to be called the “Otago Southern Trunk Railway.” While not opposed to its construction by private enterprise, or by a public company, supported by a Government guarantee, they have cause to suspect that, should the execution of the works not be undertaken in that manner, the Provincial Government itself would seek to carry them out, placed though it be in a financial position totally incompatible with the magnitude of such an undertaking, and reckless of the absorption of funds which, honestly and judiciously expended, would tend to the prosperity of the Province generally, but unfairly and extravagantly, would steep it as a whole more and more in irretrievable difficulties.

That in view of the probability of increased powers being sought to be conferred on Provincial Governments at the forthcoming Session, your Petitioners strongly protest against such a scheme obtaining the sanction of your Honourable House, until outlying districts shall have been entitled and empowered to control and administer a fair proportion of the revenues accruing within their respective boundaries.

Your Petitioners, relying on the desire of your Honourable House to veto the continuance of evils reasonably complained of, and which militate against the prosperity of the Colony at large, therefore pray that you will again take their case into serious consideration, and legislate so that a total change be wrought in the Provincial Government system; that Local Boards be established in the outlying districts for the administration of their own affairs, with power over a just and equitable portion of the Land Fund; and generally so to regulate matters that the centralizing influences presently at work may be destroyed, and the advancement and prosperity of the Colony fostered and perpetuated.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

S. GIBBS, Oamaru.

[Here follow 295 signatures.]

