

## MEMORANDUM ON THE FOREGOING REPORT BY MR. REYNOLDS.

I CANNOT entirely concur in the above Report, inasmuch as portions of it deal with subjects which, in my opinion, were not remitted by His Excellency the Governor for the consideration of the Commissioners.

The instructions contained in the Commission are, "to investigate and report on the administration of the Waste Crown Lands in the Province of Otago, and to make such suggestions in connection therewith, &c."

Confining myself exclusively to the terms of the Commission of His Excellency, I would respectfully submit that the Provincial Government of Otago have acted in strict conformity with "The Otago Waste Lands Act, 1866:"

1. In the sale of lands by auction within Hundreds, at the upset price of 10s. per acre, such sales having been effected under a resolution of the Provincial Council, in conformity with the existing law.

2. In entering into covenants with runholders outside of Hundreds, whereby blocks of land were reserved for sale and occupation. The Government, in reserving these blocks, evidently contemplated the securing of revenue to the Province, the settlement of the public lands, and also to avoid the necessity, as far as possible, of the proclamation of Hundreds.

The defects in the administration are:—

1. In connection with the Tuapeka Agricultural Reserve. From the evidence laid before the Commissioners, it appears that there has existed a conflict between the Wardens and the Superintendent, as to the area to be set aside for depasturing sheep. The agricultural lessees complain that two or three sheep-farmers monopolize a large portion of the commonage for sheep, to the exclusion of other stock. The evidence, as far as it goes, seems to be in favour of the complainants. It is not complete, however, as a principal witness, Mr. John Hughes, a late member of the Provincial Executive Council, and who represents the Tuapeka District, has failed to supply the Commission with the whole of his evidence, although urged, almost daily, to do so by Mr. Strode and myself.

2. The delay which has occurred in the issue of agricultural leases on the gold fields, whereby there has been loss to the revenue of the Province, and the lessees have been inconvenienced by not being at once put in possession of the lands applied for.

3. The fact that the Government has in some instances charged and received double payment for the survey of agricultural leases. This has arisen through the conflict between the General and Provincial Governments, with regard to the delegation of His Excellency's powers, under the Gold Fields Act, to the Superintendent.

There is nothing further in connection with the past administration which calls for additional remarks; and with regard to the future, I would respectfully submit the following suggestions:—

1. That the management of the agricultural reserves on the gold fields should not rest with the Superintendent, or any political body, but rather with the Waste Lands Board, which, instead of being composed of members of the Executive Council, should also be non-political.

2. That promptitude be observed in the issue of agricultural leases, both for the protection of the revenue, and the facilitating of settlement.

3. That either the General or Provincial Government take immediate steps for refunding to agricultural lessees who have been twice charged with the cost of survey, the amounts so overcharged.

There are many defects in connection with the Gold Fields and Waste Lands Acts, which interfere with their proper administration; but these being, in most instances, questions of policy, I do not consider I am entitled to treat upon them under the terms of the Commission issued by His Excellency.

WILLIAM H. REYNOLDS.