

## No. 4.

The PROVINCIAL SECRETARY to C. H. CRAMPTON.

SIR,—

Superintendent's Office, Nelson, 5th February, 1872.

The Provincial Government having carefully considered the memorial from a large number of miners and others resident at the Inangahua, which you have presented to the Superintendent, praying that no leases of ground for quartz mining may be granted in that district, and the representations which you have made personally in support of its prayer, I have to reply as follows:—

The number of leases for quartz mining hitherto granted at the Inangahua is three only—two of twelve acres each, and one of ten acres—the area being in each case considerably within the limit permitted by law.

These leases were applied for in April, 1871, and were granted on the recommendation of the Warden. The usual public notice was given in each case, and the time (twenty-one days) prescribed by law for objections was allowed by the Warden. Two months' notice of the intention of the Superintendent to grant the leases was also subsequently given in the *Provincial Gazette* and the local newspapers, in accordance with the regulations.

The ground comprised in two of them was already held by the applicants as claims under their miners' rights, and the third consisted of ground which had been previously taken up and abandoned.

Although the Government is informed that many further applications have been made, none have as yet been forwarded to the Superintendent, owing to the time necessary for inquiry by the Warden, and for the hearing of objections, and to delay in the execution of the surveys.

Each application which may be supported by the recommendation of the Warden will be considered upon its own merits, and the representations of the memorialists shall receive the most careful attention.

But the Provincial Government cannot undertake to advise the Superintendent to refuse all applications for leases made in conformity with law, and supported, as some of them may probably be, by the recommendation of the Warden, until at least the grounds on which that recommendation is made are known and considered. They believe that the public interest might in some cases be materially sacrificed by such indiscriminate refusal, and that the effective development of resources of immense value to the Colony would not unfrequently be indefinitely delayed by the refusal to grant the extended area and the better established tenure provided by the leasing clause of the Gold Fields Act.

The very large capital not unfrequently required for the successful prosecution of quartz mining would, in the opinion of the Government, not otherwise be forthcoming for undertakings which are frequently of an extremely speculative character; and it would be easy to adduce many notable instances, both in this Colony and elsewhere, in support of this opinion.

The Provincial Executive will, however, generally advise the refusal of leases in cases in which the ground can, according to the best information they can obtain, be effectively worked by individual miners taking up ordinary claims, and they will give every facility and encouragement to persons combining for the purpose of obtaining a lease in exchange for two or more of such claims.

In any lease which may otherwise be granted, care will be taken that the area is not greater than appears to be necessary for the effective working of the ground, and also, as a general, although, especially as applicable to abandoned ground, not invariable rule, that the number of men to be employed upon the ground leased shall approach the number who could hold the same ground as ordinary claims.

The Government will also do all in its power to prevent evasion of the law by applications for more than one lease being put in, whether directly or indirectly, by the same person or persons, except in cases where they can satisfactorily prove that they are acting in the capacity of agents only.

Every precaution will moreover be taken to prevent any portion of more than one reef being included in the ground granted under any lease, upon which point the Warden will be requested to make full inquiry.

The Government will direct their early attention to the best means of securing, firstly, that such conditions shall be included in any lease which may be granted as will insure the early and effective working of the ground; and, secondly, that such conditions are duly complied with by the lessees.

They will also use their best endeavours to shorten the time which now elapses between the date of application for a lease and the granting or refusal of such application by the Superintendent, during which interval the applicant cannot be called upon to work the ground, as he has no title and may never have one, and the ground is consequently locked up.

The time required by law for lodging and hearing objections in every case, cannot of course be interfered with; and in case of a successful application, the required notice of the intention of the Superintendent to grant a lease must be given and expire before a lease can be issued, and its conditions enforced.

But in other respects and more especially as regards the surveys, the Government trust, now that they have stationed a Warden on the spot, to be able to make arrangements by which applications may be disposed of in comparatively a short time.

The Government is also inclined to think that the publication of this statement of their views and intentions will lead to the withdrawal of a large proportion of the applications now pending, and to a great diminution in the number of such applications for the future.

In arriving at the conclusion that it would not be consistent with their duty to refuse, without consideration or exception, all applications for leases of land for quartz mining at the Inangahua, the Provincial Government have been guided by what they believe will best serve the interests of the community as a whole, to whom the property they have to administer belongs, and also by what they are convinced are the true interests of the miners and others who have signed the memorial, and who form so considerable and so influential a portion of that community.

I have, &amp;c.,

ALFRED GREENFIELD,  
Provincial Secretary.

Mr. C. H. Crampton, Nelson Hotel.