

rights, and large and expensive preparatory works have been performed and undertaken. The effect of this erratic and unjustifiable action of the Superintendent, if tolerated, would be most illegally to deprive the men of ground they would be entitled to hold under miners' rights."

In every case of application for a lease of ground held under miners' rights a larger area of ground than that so held has been granted; and even were it not so, I am not aware that the rights of miners so previously holding the ground could in any degree be prejudiced by the refusal to grant a lease over the same land. The remainder of the paragraph I have quoted is equally without foundation.

I have only further to say that the object of the Provincial Government has been to arrest the improper and mischievous locking-up of block after block of the reefs in the hands of mere speculators, in a manner equally unjust and injurious to the *bonâ fide* capitalist and the miner, and calculated most seriously to damage the character and retard the progress of the district.

In support of the policy which the Provincial Government has pursued in this matter, and of the views I have expressed in this letter, I ask your attention to the following extract from the official report upon the Auckland Gold Fields for the year 1870-71, furnished by order of the House of Representatives, and printed in the Appendix to the Journals, 1871, Vol. II., G. 31.

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"The cause of the depression thus briefly referred to is not far to seek. It is to be found in the wholesale taking up of supposed auriferous country in the hope of selling it for large sums of money, and the formation of companies based on value utterly fallacious, the country being entirely unproved, or rather unprospected."

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The same Report (Table H) shows that the average area of the mining leases in operation upon the Thames Gold Fields on 30th June, 1871, was slightly under five acres, while the average areas of the mining leases and special claims granted by the Provincial Government in the Inangahua District, to which the petition refers, exceeds eight acres.

Should the Colonial Government wish for any further information respecting the allegations contained in the petition, I shall be most happy to furnish it.

The Hon. W. Gisborne, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
OSWALD CURTIS,
Superintendent.

No. 7.

MR. G. S. COOPER to MR. W. PITT.

SIR,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Wellington, 7th August, 1872.

I am directed by Mr. Gisborne to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 25th May last, enclosing a petition to His Excellency the Governor from certain of the inhabitants at Reefton as to the administration of South-West Gold Fields in the Nelson Province; and, in reply, to state that the papers on the subject shall be laid before the House of Representatives, and referred to the Gold Fields Committee.

I am to inform you that the general question of the Government of the South-West Nelson and Westland Gold Fields is about to be brought under the consideration of the General Assembly.

I have, &c.,
G. S. COOPER,
Under Secretary.

Wm. Pitt, Esq., Reefton, Nelson.
