

WEDNESDAY, 2ND OCTOBER, 1872.

There being no quorum, the meeting lapsed.

PRESENT :

Mr. Mervyn,		Mr. O'Neill.
		Mr. Macandrew.

THURSDAY, 17TH OCTOBER, 1872.

There being no quorum, the meeting lapsed at about 11.20 o'clock.

PRESENT :

Mr. Bradshaw,		Mr. O'Neill.
		Mr. Macandrew.

FRIDAY, 18TH OCTOBER, 1872.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

PRESENT :

Mr. Bradshaw,		Mr. Sheehan,
Mr. J. C. Brown,		Mr. T. L. Shepherd,
Mr. Mervyn,		Mr. Tribe,
Mr. O'Neill,		Mr. White.

Mr. Macandrew in the chair.

The order of reference concerning the Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill was read.

The Committee considered the Bill, and passed it without amendments.

To report accordingly.

The Committee then proceeded to consider the sale of auriferous land at Switzers to Allan McDonald.

Mr. Brown, member of the Committee, gave evidence, which is hereto attached.

Proposed by Mr. Shepherd, seconded by Mr. Bradshaw, That this Committee recommend that His Honor the Superintendent of Otago should cause strict inquiry to be made on the spot, as circumstances of a grave character, connected with the case, have been brought to light, which require clearing up.

The Chairman to report accordingly. (*Vide ante.*)

The Committee then adjourned.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 18TH OCTOBER, 1872.

J. C. BROWN, Esq., M.H.R., in attendance and examined.

1. I am acquainted with the 50 acres of land referred to. I am aware that a considerable portion of it has been in work by miners for the last eight years. Mr. Acton was in possession of it until about two years ago, and has taken considerable quantities of gold from the ground. Two years ago it was sold at auction, at the instance of Acton's creditors. The auctioneers were Messrs. McLandress Hepburn, and Co., the purchaser being Mr. Warden Woods. Acton endeavoured to secure a lease or freehold of the property, and in that endeavour went to considerable trouble and expense; but up to the time of the sale he did not succeed. At this time the only title to the ground was a permissive occupation from the runholder, a business license, and miners' rights. The auctioneers sold the property subject to these rights. The property comprised not only the claim, but also a useful garden, store, and licensed house, and many other improvements were upon it. Mr. Wood's purchase comprised only the same rights as had been enjoyed previously by Acton.

2. *Mr. Macandrew.*] What did he pay for the purchase?—I believe about £200. Mr. Woods immediately afterwards let the property on a lease with a purchasing clause to Mr. H. W. Simpson, who I believe subsequently purchased the property from Mr. Woods, and afterwards sold his right and title to it to Allan McDonald. Simpson subsequently left the district. Allan McDonald afterwards sold his right to Mr. Bastings. This took place before the freehold had been acquired from the Waste Land Board. A short time after the sale to Bastings, McDonald became purchaser of the freehold to the land. I understand Bastings had to give a bonus of £200 before he got the land transferred to him. During all this time the claim had been wrought to advantage, as many as ten, twenty, and thirty men at various times being at work on the ground. These men sometimes worked the claim upon tribute, receiving a proportion of the gold excavated from the ground.

3. *Mr. Shepherd.*] Who was the first purchaser of the right from Acton—Woods or McDonald?—Woods.

4. What was the extent of that purchase?—He purchased all the buildings on the ground,—the hotel, the store, the garden, and the stockyard; also, Acton's right.