

“That for some time provisions were supplied us at moderate prices, in return for labour done on roads, but that we received little or no cash.

“That, without notice to your petitioners, the Government store has been sold and its contents to the director of the settlement, or his trading partners, and that the price of provisions has been raised to an exorbitant degree.

“That the distribution of labour has been made in a most capricious manner, many of your petitioners getting little or no work while others have been fully employed.

“That no steamer has called at the port for many months past, and that therefore your petitioners have been debarred from obtaining stores from a cheaper market, and also from getting rid of any produce they may have had for sale.

“That they have grave reasons for supposing and verily believe that large profits have been made by the present director of the settlement in trading transactions with your petitioners, in excess of any profits contemplated in the original scheme of settlement.

“That they believe it would conduce to the progress of the settlement if the present director were relieved from his charge thereof, and that any further expenditure of public money on the Karamea Settlement should be under the control of the Buller County Council.

“That the subsidizing of a steamer to call periodically at the port, and the outlay of a moderate sum of money on public works within the Karamea District, will make the settlement a success.

“Your petitioners therefore pray that your honorable House will investigate the matters complained of, and that such relief be granted to your petitioners as may seem just.

“And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

“Dated 17th August, 1877.”

(Here follow 39 signatures.)

“That, as special settlers, we have been permitted to take up land at the Karamea on deferred payments.

“That, in occupying land in such a remote locality, we were assured by the Nelson provincial authorities—(1.) That we should be supplied with stores at moderate prices. (2.) That work would be given us whereby we might earn money sufficient to pay for such stores, and also to pay the instalments of money falling due on our land. (3.) That a subsidized steamer would call at the port.”

A.—The settlers were permitted to take up land in quantity in every instance in excess of what was promised, and have had possession for nearly three years without having been asked to pay a shilling of rent upon it.

No assurance was given the settlers concerning stores except what was conveyed through the regulations (copy annexed), in which it will be noted that the conditions pertaining to provisions were made merely as a preliminary arrangement to start with, it being plainly intimated therein that seven months was the limit. A liberal interpretation, however, has been put upon the aforesaid condition, and the Government for the last two and a half years has supplied them with provisions and other necessaries at cost price—*i.e.*, at a price calculated to cover the cost of the stores, inclusive of freight, storekeeping, and other incidental charges. Considering that this has been done, and that in addition work has been taken in payment for the provisions, &c., at prices much higher than the settlers were ever led to expect, and as high as could be obtained in any part of the southern hemisphere, I am at a loss to know how they can entertain any other feelings in return for such liberal treatment except gratitude. No promise whatever was given, to my knowledge, by the Provincial Government, to the effect that work would be given to pay for the instalments due upon the land in their occupation. The arrangement concerning the steamer was limited to six months, and afterwards extended without any promise of continuance.

I beg to draw attention to the fact that the memorial has been signed by fifteen persons who are not entitled to style themselves special settlers. Subjoined is a list of the names objected to. The first eight are not classed as special settlers, the remaining seven are miners on the beach, and the last man (Mr. Harvy) stated at the inquiry that he did not sign the memorial, but believed that his wife had signed a paper in his name.

*List of Persons objected to.*—J. Simpson, R. Johnson, jun., A. Lineham, C. Scarlett, A. Jacobsen, H. Jordan, G. Allen, F. Large, W. Hopley, C. Noggins, H. Laster, J. Cooper, J. McHarvy, H. Abbott, A. McDonald, W. Harvy.

“That for some time provisions were supplied us at moderate prices in return for labour done on roads, but that we received little or no cash.”

A.—Provisions have been supplied at moderate prices up to the present time, for which many of the settlers are still in debt, notwithstanding that payment has been taken from them at as high rate of wages as obtains in any part of the colony. Latterly, all payments have been made in cash either to the settlers or to their agents, and survey work has been distributed among them since last January amounting to about £300, which has also been paid for in cash. Within the last few days the *p.s.* “Result” arrived at Karamea from Westport with a cargo of provisions valued at about £400, sufficient to supply the settlement for nearly three months, and this was almost all sold for cash in two days. Where did the money come from?

“That the distribution of labour has been made in a most capricious manner, many of your petitioners getting little or no work, while others have been fully employed.”

A.—This is also false; the books of the settlement would show it to be so, even if every settler on the Karamea affirmed the contrary. A great deal of jealousy prevails among the settlers themselves, which it is very hard to guard against; but, upon examination, it will be seen that all have had sufficient work to provide for their needs.

“That, without notice to your petitioners, the Government store has been sold and its contents to the director of the settlement or his trading partners, and that the price of provisions has been raised to an exorbitant degree.”