

1881.

## NEW ZEALAND

## GOLD FIELDS COMMITTEE

(GENERAL REPORT OF).

*Presented to the House of Representatives, Session 1881, and ordered to be printed.*

## GENERAL REPORT.

THE House having, by resolution, extended the powers and functions of the Gold Fields Committee beyond those originally contained in the order of reference, by adding thereto, "That the Gold Fields Committee be empowered to take into consideration all matters affecting the welfare of the gold fields, and to report to the House thereon," the Committee have the honor to report as follows:—

That, in the opinion of the Committee, the administration of the Mines Department has failed to give such satisfaction in mining districts as it was hoped would be the case when the portfolio of Minister of Mines was created.

That no practical aid in the development of mines, or in the dissemination of useful information among mining communities, has resulted from the establishment of the department.

That these unsatisfactory results are not to be attributed to any disinclination on the part of the individual Minister from time to time in charge of the department to further the mining interests, nor to the want of a full appreciation of the value and importance of gold-mining, but to the fact that other Ministerial duties have always engrossed his full time and attention.

That the following recommendation made by the Royal Commission for the Promotion of Colonial Industries is most valuable, and ought to be given practical effect to by the Government, viz.,

"That a thorough examination should be made of the settlements on the west coast of the Middle Island, with a view to ascertaining what aid can most effectively and advantageously be given by the Government to the production of gold, coal, iron, timber, and other valuable materials, which are known to exist there in boundless profusion, but under conditions of difficulty insuperable to a sparse population of limited means and appliances."

That it is desirable the Government should also take prompt action in assisting the further development of the gold fields, by aiding the construction of water-races; by opening up roads and tracks into the interior of the country in gold-mining districts; by encouraging and assisting prospecting; by simplifying the administration of the law in the several Courts of law; by reducing the fees payable under the Mines Act, and the rules and regulations framed thereunder; by charging a minimum rate for the water supplied by their several races; by reducing the charge imposed upon miners' rights to ten shillings; by furthering the efforts of companies, prospectors, and others, by the supply of all information obtainable from California, Australia, and other mining countries, and by the encouragement and establishment of museums and schools of mines throughout the colony and mineralogical professorships in connection therewith.

That in the various provisions made for a local finance for the gold-fields districts, by the localisation of gold revenue, it has not been sufficiently considered that the miners do not own the lands which their operations render necessary should be opened up by roads and bridges; that they are the forerunners of settlement, and not those who permanently benefit by the construction of such works. Your Committee do not consider it just, or in the direction of sound economy, that under such circumstances the produce of gold fields should be alone exceptionally taxed in order to provide for the cost of local works on gold fields.

That steps should be taken to relieve the miners from special taxation, and to provide local revenue which would fall equitably upon the population, and would be aided by the revenue derived from the waste lands of the Crown.

That the gold duty should be reduced, and ultimately abolished.

That, until these inequalities be remedied, local bodies in many of the gold-fields districts will be unable to perform their duty in assisting the efforts of the inhabitants to develop the resources of the district and colony

That no mineral or agricultural leases should be granted by a Waste Lands Board except upon the recommendation of the Warden of the district in which the land is situated.

That the Government be urgently recommended to purchase six diamond-drill boring-machines the use of which to be given to those County Councils who will undertake to accept all responsibility, and liability in connection with the control, management, and working of such machines.