

## No. 251.—Petition of ARCHIBALD McLOGHEY and 2 Others.

THE petitioners state that they hold certain lands in the Ohinemuri Riding under the Agricultural Leasing Regulations, 1875, and they pray that the Government may complete the purchase of that block to enable them to obtain freehold thereof without advance upon the original cost.

Your Committee have the honour to report: That, the Government having now obtained the freehold of the ground occupied by the petitioners and others, under regulations for occupation under agricultural leases issued in or about the year 1875, more permanent tenure should be offered to the occupiers, provided the mining interests of the district are not prejudiced thereby, and a freehold granted to them at a price not being more than the upset price charged for lands of the same class in the Auckland Provincial District.

2nd August, 1883.

## DRAINAGE OF MINES BILL, 1883.

THE Gold Fields Committee report the Bill, and recommend that, if it be further proceeded with, it be therein provided that it may be brought into force by Proclamation in such mining districts in which the Governor shall be satisfied, upon petition from the miners, that it is generally desired.

2nd August, 1883.

## No. 110.—Petition of the CHAIRMAN and COUNCILLORS of the THAMES COUNTY COUNCIL.

Your Committee have to report upon the petition of the Chairman and Councillors of the Thames County Council. The petitioners allege:—

1. That the Government has acquired valid titles to the Ohinemuri Gold Field by purchase.
2. That, under and by virtue of section 20 of "The Financial Arrangements Act, 1876," all gold fields revenue (other than revenue payable to the Native owners) was directed to be paid to the county in which such revenue accrued.
3. That £5,000 or, thereabouts, gold-fields revenue, accrued between January, 1877, and the 14th day of June, 1882, which has not been paid to the Natives or to the petitioners.

The Committee have taken the evidence of Mr. Judge Puckey, Mr. A. Porter, and Mr. Gill (Land Purchase Department), and find,—

1. That the purchase by the Government of the gold field was completed in or about the month of July, 1882.
2. That all gold fields revenue accrued from the date when the freehold vested in the Crown (July, 1882) has been paid to the county.
3. That all gold-fields revenue, which accrued prior to July, 1882, has been credited to the Natives, as against a sum of £15,000 paid to them by the Government.
4. That the sum of £15,000 was not paid on account of the purchase, Mr. Gill stating that the Commissioner would have been justified under instructions in giving £30,000 for the acquirement of the right to proclaim and occupy the gold field.
5. That the balance of the £15,000, less the amount of gold revenue credited to the Natives, appears to have been treated as part of the purchase-money agreed upon by the Government, which purchase was concluded in 1882.

The Committee are of opinion that it is quite clear that the petitioners have no claim.

It has been contended that the Government was actually the purchaser from the moment it first paid any sum of money to the Natives, which might by law have been assessed at any time in land to the value thereof by the Land Court.

This contention, whatever it may be worth, appears to be untenable, as the evidence before the Committee is that the sum of £15,000 was not paid on account of purchase, but was really a payment for the right to proclaim, and perhaps occupy, the gold fields. The fact, if it be one, that the Government subsequently succeeded in inducing the Natives to allow this sum to be treated as an advance of purchase-money, does not alter the position.

The Committee are informed that the County Council has endeavoured to obtain the consent of the Crown to allow a suit to be instituted in the Supreme Court, but that the necessary consent was refused.

The Committee are of opinion that no claim exists; yet it considers that, if the Council is advised it has a legal claim, no technical barrier should be interposed by the Government to prevent the Council endeavouring to establish such claim; provided that, whatever the result may be, no further claim shall hereafter be made against the Crown, by petition or otherwise, to repay the costs of litigation should the Council's claim be rejected.

7th August, 1883.

## Nos. 344, 343, and 356.—Petitions of MICHAEL GIFFNEY and 55 Others, CHARLES STEWART and 148 Others, and JOHN PARKIN and 131 Others.

THE petitioners pray for the abolition of the gold duty.

Your Committee recommend that the gold duty be abolished in accordance with the prayer of the petitioners.

3rd August, 1883.

## Nos. 394, 391, 392, and 393.—Petitions of THOMAS MALONY and Others, JOHN LIVINGSTONE and Others, JAMES KEITH and Others, and JOHN MCKERSIE and Another.

THE House having now dealt with the Bill the subject-matter of the petition, your Committee have no recommendation to make.

9th August, 1883.