

Hon. the Premier.—It would be desirable to ask the Agent-General to obtain information from the principal metallurgical firms at Freiburg, in Germany, and at Swansea, in England (especially from those who have large works for the extraction of refractory ores containing gold and silver), as to the mode of treatment adopted, if the same is not a secret process; also to see if any of those firms would come out to this colony and erect similar metallurgical works here. In the event of the treatment being a secret process, to see upon what terms, if any, a person from this colony could be instructed and taught the process they use; and also to see if there are any books published that contain a description of the process of treating these ores at Freiburg and Swansea, and, if so, to forward copies of the same; and generally to obtain any information bearing on the treatment of refractory ores.—G. F. RICHARDSON." That this delay in giving effect to the recommendation made by the Committee of last session has placed the Committee this session at a disadvantage in dealing with the question referred to it under the order of reference hereinbefore mentioned. That the Committee is of opinion that delay in dealing with this question is inimical to the mining industry, and would urge that the Government should at once, in addition to the information asked to be obtained by the Agent-General, endeavour to obtain information from America, through the Colonial Agent and other sources.

29th June, 1888.

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REPORT ON THE MINING ACT 1886 AMENDMENT BILL.

THE Goldfields and Mines Committee, to whom was referred the above Bill, have the honour to report that they have considered the same, and recommend that it be allowed to proceed with the amendments set forth in the annexed copy of the Bill.

12th July, 1888.

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No. 323.—Petition of JOHN DOWLING and Others.

THE petitioners pray that the Paroa River and the New River may be proclaimed sludge-channels.

I am directed to report as follows: That the petition be referred to the Government, and the Committee recommend the Government to give effect to the prayer of the petition as soon as the Mining Act 1886 Amendment Bill is passed.

14th August, 1888.

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INTERIM REPORT No. 2 ON ORDER OF REFERENCE of the 5th June, relating to the Mining Industry of the Colony.

THE Goldfields and Mines Committee, to whom was referred the consideration generally of the best means whereby the gold- and silver-mining industry of the colony may be fostered and encouraged, have the honour to report,—

1. That, in the opinion of this Committee, the development of the vast mineral resources of the colony would be greatly furthered by their existence being brought prominently on every occasion before the world, so as to attract the attention of investors in mining enterprise, and lead to the introduction of foreign capital.

2. That your Committee are of opinion that the Victorian Centennial Exhibition now being held, and the Paris Exhibition to be held in May next, both offer splendid opportunities of bringing our mineral products before the public, and that such opportunities should certainly not be neglected.

3. That your Committee, after making the fullest inquiry, are of opinion that it is desirable that the present mineral exhibits from the colony at Melbourne should be augmented by exhibits of auriferous and argentiferous ores, auriferous cements and sands, copper ore, and nickeliferous sand, and other mineral products, in bulk.

4. That your Committee are also of opinion that maps showing the several mining districts and chief localities where mining is now being carried on might with advantage be exhibited; also that the area of proved auriferous ground, the number of claims, the capital invested, and dividends paid should be published in pamphlet-form and distributed gratis.

5. That it would be advisable, when the mineral exhibits of the colony are completed, to have a separate catalogue thereof compiled, and distributed gratis.

6. That, in the opinion of your Committee, it is to be regretted that the Mines Department left the collection of the mineral exhibits entirely to the Commissioners, and declined to take any active part in it, beyond supplying to the Commissioners the specimens in the possession of the department, especially as the correspondence shows that the Commissioners desired that the mining industry should be dealt with by the department. It appears, however, that the Commissioners did not do the subject justice after being requested by the department to undertake the sole management of the mineral exhibits; for the specimens in the possession of the department were not obtained by the Commissioners and forwarded, nor was the chief officer of the department asked for information or for assistance. It would also have been much better had the Department of Mines taken steps to ascertain whether or not full justice was being done to the mining industry by the Commissioners in the way of supplying exhibits and information. From the evidence before the Committee, and the correspondence received, it is quite clear that the sums offered by the Commissioners to the several local committees were altogether insufficient to defray the expense of procuring exhibits. On the other hand, the Commissioners, though practising the most rigid economy, have exceeded the sum placed at their disposal. Want of sufficient funds may therefore be set down as one cause why the mineral wealth of the colony has not been more fully represented at the Victorian Centennial Exhibition. The Committee, however, are of opinion that, when the Commissioners found themselves unable to obtain a sufficiency of exhibits on account of the inadequacy of the sum allowed for expenses, they ought to have applied to the Government for more money; and, had their application been refused, the Commissioners would have