

WASTE LANDS COMMITTEE.

(REPORT ON THE WESTLAND AND NELSON COALFIELDS ADMINISTRATION ACT 1877
AMENDMENT BILL.)

THE Waste Lands Committee, to whom was referred the Westland and Nelson Coalfields Administration Act 1877 Amendment Bill, have the honour to report that they have duly considered the same, and beg to recommend that it be allowed to proceed with the amendments thereto, which are shown on the attached copy of the Bill.

26th September, 1893.

R. THOMPSON, Chairman.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 19TH SEPTEMBER, 1893. (Mr. R. THOMPSON, Chairman.)

Mr. JAMES MCKERROW, Chief Commissioner of Railways, examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] You appear to give evidence in support of this report which is before the Committee?—Yes.

2. This report contains your opinion concerning the matters which are now being inquired into?—Yes.

3. Have you anything further to add to what is contained in the report?—I have nothing further to say.

4. *Hon. Mr. McKenzie.*] Have you seen the report of the Commissioners appointed by His Excellency to inquire into the matter now under consideration?—Yes, I read it this morning.

5. Do you agree with that report?—No, I do not. They made recommendations with a view to subsequent action.

6. They recommended that the sections from Nelson Street to Kennedy Street should not be re-let?—Yes; that is with respect to the north of Nelson Street. We thought, at one time, that might be done for twenty-one years; but now we think it right to withdraw our assent from such a proposition, the reason being that circumstances have arisen which affect the public interests in this place.

7. They say, with regard to the sections south of Nelson Street and between Nelson and Bentham Streets, the Railway Commissioners are of opinion that they may be let for a term of twenty-one years also?—That is so.

8. But they go on to say that this term is merely an arbitrary term, and might be extended to at least thirty years, if not to forty-two years; you do not back up your engineer's opinion in that particular?—We back it up in the main as to the twenty-one years; but some engineers have reported the dangerous condition of the bank, occasioned by the flood-water of the river, so that it was necessary to send down an engineer specially to put down piles to prevent any damage that might be caused.

9. Then, you have had reason to alter the opinion you had previously expressed, in consequence of facts that have come to your knowledge?—Yes.

10. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] Have you verified the Bill by comparison with the report of the Commissioners in regard to the recommendations?—It recommends twenty-one years, renewable; we recommended twenty-one years, with no renewal.

11. Had the Railway Commissioners at any time recommended more than than twenty-one years?—No.

12. But the Railway Commissioners did recommend twenty-one years?—Yes; but we now withdraw that.

13. *The Chairman.*] Then, at the present time, there should be no section taken?—No; the leases have five years to run yet.

14. *Mr. O'Connor.*] I would like Mr. McKerrow to say whether he speaks for himself only, or whether he includes the other Railway Commissioners. Do they agree with you in thinking that there is this danger you mention?—Yes, they do.