

1895.

NEW ZEALAND.

WASTE LANDS COMMITTEE.

(REPORT ON THE PETITION OF J. J. ELWIN AND 272 OTHERS RELATIVE TO THE WEST COAST SETTLEMENT RESERVES, TOGETHER WITH EVIDENCE TAKEN THEREON, AND APPENDICES.)

Report brought up 2nd October, 1895, and ordered to be printed, together with Evidence and Appendices.

REPORT.

PETITIONERS, who are leaseholders of Native estates covered by "The West Coast Native Reserves Act, 1892," and administered by the Public Trustee, state that the said administration has been and is unsatisfactory both to the tenants and Native owners, and has failed to fulfil the intention of the Legislature to assist settlement, legalise improper tenures, and improve the condition of the Natives. They consider the Land Board to be the proper body to administer the said estates, and pray for legislation so that these lands shall come under the common law of the colony that the disadvantages may be removed under which they labour.

I have the honour to report that it is the opinion of the Waste Lands Committee the subject-matter of this petition refers to a question of public policy, and therefore recommends that it be referred to the Government for consideration.

2nd October, 1895.

R. THOMPSON, Chairman.

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Council and House of Representatives of New Zealand in Parliament assembled.

THE humble petition of the undersigned humbly sheweth,—

1. That your petitioners live and are leaseholders in the district covered by "The West Coast Settlement Reserves Act, 1892."

2. That the administration of the said Act has been satisfactory to neither the tenant nor the Native owner.

3. That all charges under the said Act are exorbitant, and are levied to the detriment of any action under the Act, and that, by demanding the insurance of all buildings in the name of the Public Trustee, the security is removed from financial action on the part of the tenant.

4. That the Act, as administered, has not fulfilled the intention of the Legislature to assist the struggling settler to legalise improper tenures, neither has it improved the condition of the Natives.

5. That great hardships and unnecessary expenses have been imposed on tenants and Natives by the present interpretation of the Act.

6. That, under cover of the term "in the interest of the beneficiaries under the trust," the Public Trustee bars settlement, refuses to improve the Native estate, and imposes rents on lands which are totally inadequate to maintain such amounts