

REPORTS OF THE PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE.

REPORTS of the PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE on the PETITION of certain INHABITANTS of CANTERBURY.

FIRST REPORT, 28TH JULY, 1870.

THE petitioners, thirteen in number, inhabitants of the Province of Canterbury, pray that the House will be pleased to repeal "The Canterbury Thistle Ordinance, 1866," on the grounds that it is inapplicable to the present state of the Province, and that it is repugnant to the law of England.

The Committee have taken some pains to ascertain the present state of the several Thistle Ordinances in the different Provinces of New Zealand, and the result of their inquiry is as follows:—

REMARKS.

Southland.—A Thistle Ordinance passed by the Provincial Council. Not yet repealed, but allowed to remain a dead letter.

Otago.—A Thistle Ordinance passed by the Provincial Council. Lately repealed in consequence of the impossibility to carry its provisions into effect.

Canterbury.—A Thistle Ordinance passed by the Provincial Council, for the most part in abeyance, but occasionally used as an engine of oppression.

Nelson.—A Thistle Ordinance passed by the Provincial Council, but repealed in consequence of the impossibility to carry its provisions into effect.

Marlborough.—A Thistle Ordinance passed by the Provincial Council, but repealed lately in consequence of the impossibility to carry its provisions into effect.

Wellington.—A Thistle Ordinance passed by the Provincial Council. Not yet repealed, but allowed to remain a dead letter, it having been found impossible to carry out its provisions, and the existence of the plant having been found, generally speaking, to be beneficial instead of noxious in its results.

Hawke's Bay.—A Thistle Ordinance passed by the Provincial Council was repealed, it being found impossible to carry out its provisions.

Taranaki.—A Thistle Ordinance passed by the Provincial Council. Not yet repealed, but allowed to remain a dead letter, it being found impossible to carry out its provisions.

Auckland.—A Thistle Ordinance passed by the Provincial Council. Not yet repealed. Occasionally used as an engine of extortion and oppression.

It appears from the above statement that all the Provinces have at different times passed Thistle Ordinances; that the Provinces of Otago, Nelson, Marlborough, and Hawke's Bay have repealed their Ordinances; that in the Provinces of Southland, Wellington, and Taranaki, the Ordinances have not been repealed, but that they are allowed to be a dead letter; and that in the Provinces of Canterbury and Auckland the Ordinances are still in force, and that they are occasionally used for purposes other than those for which the Ordinances were passed.

I am directed to report that the Committee are of opinion that a Bill should be introduced repealing the Thistle Ordinances of all the Provinces which have not as yet repealed them; that is to say, the Thistle Ordinances of Southland, Canterbury, Wellington, Taranaki, and Auckland.

SECOND REPORT, 5TH AUGUST, 1870.

THE petitioners, twelve in number, inhabitants of Canterbury, principally residing in the Leeston District, pray that "The Thistle Ordinance, 1866," of the Province of Canterbury may be repealed.

I am directed to report that the Committee hold the same opinion with reference to this petition as that contained in their report of the 28th ultimo, namely, that the Thistle Ordinances of the Provinces of Southland, Canterbury, Wellington, Taranaki, and Auckland, which are the only Provinces which have not as yet repealed their Thistle Ordinances, should be repealed.

EVIDENCE taken before the COMMITTEE, Tuesday, 2nd August, 1870.

Mr. Potts was examined, and stated—

I am Member for the District of Mount Herbert, in the Province of Canterbury. About two years ago the Provincial Government employed Thistle Inspectors. One of them came over to my house. I complained to him that thistles were on Crown lands in the neighbourhood, and when I pointed out the place he said "O lord! I can never get up there." He then went away, and I saw no more of him. Subsequently the Provincial Government employed another Inspector for the Banks' Peninsula District, and I was repeatedly compelled by him to clear the thistles off my land, at a very considerable expense. The adjacent Crown lands contained an abundant crop of thistles. A complaint was made to me by the Native owners of the Native reserve of Raupaki, that the Thistle Inspector had compelled them to clear off the thistles, whilst thistle seed was continually coming down upon their land from the Crown land on Mount Pleasant, close by. The result of my experience is, that instead of any benefit having been derived from the attempt to eradicate thistles, they are now worse than ever, because the seed has fructified in consequence of the ground being stirred up in the endeavour to chop up the thistles. I suppose that from £1,500 to £2,000 of public money has been wasted in this very foolish manner. It is not only foolish, but it is oppressive, to ask a man to keep his ground clear,

Mr. Potts.

2nd August, 1870.