

1876.
NEW ZEALAND.

GOLD FIELDS SETTLEMENT : TAXATION AND WATER RIGHTS.

(LETTER FROM THE OTAGO CENTRAL MINING ASSOCIATION : AND REPLY BY THE PREMIER.)

No. 1.

Mr. VINCENT PYKE to the Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

House of Representatives, 25th July, 1876.

I have the honor to forward to you the copy of a resolution passed by the Gold Fields Committee of this day.

“That the letter of the President of the Central Mining Association of Otago to the Hon. the Premier, and the Premier's reply thereto, which have been referred to the Committee, be returned to the Premier, with a request that they may be laid on the table of the House, so as to place the Committee in a position to report to the House thereon ; and with a further request that they may be ordered to be printed.”

I have, &c.,

VINCENT PYKE,

Chairman, Gold Fields Committee.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

No. 2.

Mr. JOHN EWING to the Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Encouraged by your kind recognition, in June, 1874, of the representations made to you by the Otago Mining Conference of that year, the Central Mining Association of Otago ventures to draw your attention to the position of the gold-mining interest at the present time, as affected by the proposed constitutional changes, and the actual and long-experienced hardships of oppressive taxation and disputed water-rights. The Association is actuated by the hope that you will be able to assure its members that the proposals to be submitted to Parliament will be beneficial to the gold miners and to the colony in which they are willing to settle, if allowed to do so on the same footing of equality as is afforded to colonists among all other interests.

1. We the more readily intrude upon you at the present time, because the action of the Government during the last session of the late Parliament directly challenged our criticism, inasmuch that it was stated repeatedly, by members of the Government and their supporters, that the perpetuation of mining taxation would be beneficial in the future, because it would be returned to the districts in which it was collected, together with a liberal subsidy for local expenditure.

The process by which the Government propose to define special gold fields districts, in which a contribution of special class taxation would be sufficiently beneficial to its contributors to justify its perpetuity, in the absence of any information or explanation from a member of the Government, is, we confess, beyond our comprehension.

For Otago, no district capable of definition could, we venture to think, be proclaimed a gold fields district in which the mining interest would be financially the paramount interest, unless, indeed, such district was of such limited area as to be, on that account, alone impracticable. At the same time, the mining population in any such district would in magnitude be out of all proportion to the agriculturists, pastoral tenants, and freeholders.

We venture to assure you that, so far from the miners wishing to evade local taxation for necessary works, they are quite willing to pay such equitable rate as may be agreed to by any local Government existing, or which may be called into existence, in which they are fairly represented ; provided that it is not specially collected from them as a class for the supposititious benefit of the population of all classes in, and to come in during the next few years, their district, county, or province.