

## REPORT ON PETITION OF JOHN GODFREY.

THE petitioner states that the Town of Picton was incorporated in 1876, and the first Mayor illegally elected by the members of the Picton Board of Works. That petitioner took action to test the validity of the election, and incurred expense.

That a clause has been inserted in "The Municipal Corporations Act, 1876," in the Legislative Council, which validates the illegal election, and constitutes the members of the Picton Board of Works Councillors of the borough.

He prays that the said clause shall not receive the sanction of the House.

I am directed to report that the non-election of Councillors by the ratepayers of the Borough of Picton, as required by law, appears to the Committee to have been an error of judgment, which is properly validated by the clause complained of by petitioner in the Municipal Corporations Act of 1876; and as it appears that the petitioner's legal expenses are to be refunded, the Committee consider that no further action is necessary.

28th October, 1876.

T. KELLY,  
Chairman.

## REPORT ON PETITION OF JOSEPH TAYLOR.

THE petitioner prays that relief be afforded him in the matter of excessive penalties imposed on him for non-performance of his contract within the stipulated time; such non-performance being mainly caused by delays occasioned by the Public Works Department, and alterations made from the original contract.

I am directed to report that the Committee, having made inquiry into the case, are of opinion that a portion of the penalty should be remitted; but the amount should be a matter for the Government to determine.

28th October, 1876.

T. KELLY,  
Chairman.

## REPORT ON PETITION OF THOMAS LEEDOM.

THE petitioner states that he entered into agreements with certain Natives, who were entitled to certain lands, to lease 490 acres; that he entered into possession and expended a considerable sum of money in fencing and placing stock thereon, and paid the Natives over £100 in advance.

That a lease was prepared in accordance with a memorandum of agreement, and the petitioner asked the licensed interpreter to translate it into the Maori language. They informed the petitioner that they were forbidden to do so. That petitioner attended the Native office with the Natives concerned, when he was told by Mr Parris that his lease was worthless, and that when the individual grants were issued he should not have one foot of the land. He prays for relief.

The Committee have made inquiry into this case; but from the want of definite information as to the various chiefs through which the land in question has passed, the matter is not so clear as the Committee desire it should be. But it appears that the land in question is confiscated land handed back to a section of the Ngatiawa tribe residing at Waitara. That at the time the petitioner negotiated the leases, the title to the land had not been individualized, and the petitioner dealt only with the chief claimants. That subsequently the late Civil Commissioner, Mr. Parris, applied to the Government to be allowed to individualize the title. This was done, and the land was awarded to some eighty or ninety persons, in amounts varying from three to thirty acres.

The Civil Commissioner then advertised for tenders to lease some 170 acres of the land, and it was let at a higher rent than the petitioner agreed to give. The Committee have inquired into the allegations made by the petitioner with respect to the Civil Commissioner refusing to allow the interpreter to interpret, and find, on examining the Civil Commissioner, that the statement is correct, and that he justifies his action on the ground that it is necessary to assume the power occasionally in the interest of the Natives, and also to refuse to accept holders of publicans' licenses as witnesses in land transactions. With respect to the petitioner's claim, it appears that he supplied goods to Natives, who appear to have a claim on the land agreed to be leased to him; but as the evidence is not sufficient to enable the Committee to come to a decision on the matter, local inquiry should be made, with the view of ascertaining whether the Natives received the goods on account of rent, and, if such should be the case, that the rent to which the Natives concerned are entitled should be deducted, to pay for the goods received from petitioner.

With respect to the leasing of Native land, the Committee are of opinion that when Natives are entitled to Crown grants to land, they should be allowed to deal with it according to law, without the interposition of the Native Department; and that when Native reserves are to be leased, they should be dealt with on a uniform system, under regulations or by Waste Lands Boards. That, with respect to interpreters who are public interpreters, it is highly improper for any Civil Commissioner or other person to assume the power of refusing his services to any member of the community, and that the Government ought at once to stop such a practice.

28th October, 1876.

T. KELLY,  
Chairman.