

1881.
NEW ZEALAND.

WASTE LANDS COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF, ON PETITION OF G. VESEY STEWART, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE).

Brought up 30th August, 1881, and ordered to be printed.

REPORT.

THE Waste Lands Committee, to whom was referred the petition of G. Vesey Stewart, that land be set apart at Pukeroa and Rangiuru for the formation of No. 4 Special Settlement, have the honor to report that, inasmuch as the petitioner has been the means of introducing into New Zealand, free of charge to the colony a large number of a desirable class of settlers, the Committee are of opinion that every encouragement should be given whereby he may be enabled to proceed further in the same direction; with which view the Committee recommend the case of the petitioner to the favourable consideration of the Government.

30th August, 1881.

HENRY BUNNY,
Chairman.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 5TH AUGUST, 1881.

MR. GEORGE VESEY STEWART, examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] Your name is George Vesey Stewart, you are the petitioner in this case?—Yes. I have already been the founder of three special settlements in this colony—namely, Nos. 1 and 2, Katikati, and No. 3, Te Puke, all in the Tauranga District. In the second paragraph of my petition I refer to the success that has attended the formation of these settlements. I refer you to the report of the Crown Ranger, H.—10, 1879. In the figures which the Crown Lands Ranger has presented in his report of the No. 1 settlement, he values the improvements at £10,943. With regard to No. 2, there is a report from the same officer, which came in only a fortnight ago, and in which he values the improvements alone at £7,981. These two sums together come to close upon £20,000, and I know of my own knowledge that the value stated in the Crown Ranger's report was very considerably below the actual cost. In addition, the expenditure for the purchase of fencing, stock, &c., has greatly increased the circulation of money in the district, benefiting every branch of trade, especially saw-mill owners, carpenters, and people with cattle to sell. In reference to No. 3, I may say that the first party only arrived at Tauranga in January last. They came in the "Lady Jocelyn," and, though she is the largest passenger ship afloat, she was quite full. They were not all for my settlement in that vessel; however, I take the broad view of things—that, when people come to the colony with capital, it does not matter to me where they settle down. There was certainly some disappointment at some roads and bridges not being built; but I think there was no grumbling or complaining sent up, and the people tackled to their work under great difficulty. I can appeal to the Minister of Lands to say that, in the short time that elapsed after their arrival, till the date he was able to pay us a visit, he had reason to be gratified at what he saw. Even since the period of his visit, great and expensive improvements have been going on, and the special-settlers' presence has been of assistance to their neighbours. In fact, of the 3,000 acres sold on the Te Puke to old settlers, I do not believe there was £500 cash among the lot. They have no way of paying their deferred-payment instalments to the Government except by the money they derive from the special settlers. That is my strong point, and that it is felt as a strong point in the neighbourhood the statements in the petition in favour of No. 4 settlement will show. They want to colonize with people from the old country who have capital and experience, and who can assist those now in the locality, who have bone and muscle. I have really very little direct interest in this application whether it is granted or not: I have no direct pecuniary interest in it. I have a great interest in it in every other way, however; and I feel, like every tradesman, the more families in the neighbourhood, the more money to be circulated, and the better for myself. In regard to clause 5, that several families of capital and income have signified their intention of joining No. 3 settlement, I may mention that the "May Queen" has been chartered to leave London on the 25th of the present month. I produce the advertisement [advertisement read].

2. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] What is the meaning of the last line—that no Government immigrants are taken in the vessel?—Some people object to travel with Government immigrants; free immigrants is what is meant, and people object to travel with that kind of passengers. The next paragraph of my petition refers to the Land Act Amendment of 1879, under which the Government has power to set aside 100,000 acres in any one year for settlements such as I now ask this land for. My application is that, of the lands of Pukeroa, in the County of Tauranga, an area of about 20,000 acres may be withdrawn from the administration of the Auckland Land Board, in order to be dealt with as a special settlement. Of this area, about 6,000 acres consist of swamp.

3. *Mr. Thomson.*] That will be the best of it?—Yes; but it is not suitable for small proprietors. If sold by the Waste Lands Board it must be bought up by some one with money to drain it: it will be the best of the land if there is a fall. Part of this land is in the Rangiuru Block, but the ownership is not settled yet between the Natives and Government, but Pukeroa is now in the hands of Government. Government would have to withdraw these lands from the Land Board if they agree to this.

petition asking for its sale. By a return laid before Parliament this session, the number of acres held by the Crown in the County of Tauranga amounts to 98,136 acres, so consequently there is an ample supply to satisfy the demand. We ask for 20,000 acres out of that, which leaves plenty of land for other people. I ask that Government should judge of every case of special settlement on its own merits. I believe, no doubt from past failures in other parts of the colony, there is a feeling on the part of some people against them; but I think the experience of the past in the Tauranga District will give promise of the future. I have referred in my petition to the expense that has been incurred in sending to Great Britain special immigration agents, without any benefit having resulted to the colony in some cases. I have never received any salary or payment of expenses from Government, never asked anything in that way, and I think I have done as much for the colony as, and a great deal more than, some of the gentlemen who have been receiving very high salaries. We have through the New Zealand Land Corporation one of the best offices in London, within two minutes' walk of the Bank of England—an office where every information is given to people, and large sums spent in advertisements. We attract attention to New Zealand, and endeavour to get people with money to join the settlements. In the "Lady Jocelyn" alone there were upwards of 100 souls (90 statute adults) in the saloon.

4. How much capital may she have brought?—I do not know, but the passage-money alone which passed through my hands was upwards of £8,000. The passage-money paid to her owners in 1878 was about the same; for the two trips the "Lady Jocelyn" made with my parties the owners received £16,000 for passages alone. I am prepared to pay for the land, as I have stated in the tenth paragraph of my petition, and I am perfectly satisfied to carry out any arrangement that may be made by the Minister of Lands on the subject. I am perfectly satisfied that any condition imposed by Government will be proposed in a right spirit. The twelfth clause of the petition, in which I refer to the advantages that can be offered to attract a suitable class of special settlers, is one in which the statement of the advantages there mentioned is supported by the requisition from Tauranga.

5. Your observation relative to Mr Rolleston making arrangements—do you make the observation that you would be satisfied with his arrangements from your experience of the conditions of past special settlement?—There is an agreement regularly drawn up in regard to each special settlement. The last agreement was very stringent on behalf of the Government. Of course, I cannot blame the Minister for looking after the interests of the colony. His action was fair, and I should be perfectly willing to bind myself as stringently again. I have always done my best to carry out whatever agreement I have undertaken to perform. I certainly am quite willing that some part of the land in the locality should be reserved for deferred-payment settlers.

6. *The Chairman.*] Probably you will put in the requisition of settlers in support of your petition?—I will. By the Standing Orders of the House I was prevented from embodying it in my petition. The requisition is signed by Mr. G. B. Morris and upwards of 370 others, and is as follows:—"To George Vesey Stewart, Esq., J.P., Mount Stewart, Katikati.—Sir,—We, the undersigned residents and settlers, Stewart's Special Settlement, and settlers on the Government deferred-payment block, in the Bay of Plenty, having seen and experienced the benefit which this district has derived from the settlements which have already sprung up here under your auspices, strongly urge on you that you should, with as little delay as possible, endeavour to secure another block of land for the formation of a No. 4 special settlement. We understand there are lands in this district, in the hands of the Government, available. We view with pleasure the great success of the scheme which has lately been adopted in the carrying-out of the settlement at Te Puke, namely, the combining of your special settlers with settlers on the deferred-payment principle, thereby securing mutual advantages to both classes of settlers. Some of the advantages are these: The deferred-payment settlers, with their colonial experience, take contracts and find work with the special settlers, whereby the new settlers reap the benefit of the experience of the old hands, and the deferred-payment settlers are the better able to carry out the improvements which their tenure under the Government renders compulsory. We need hardly point out that every addition to our population here assists in the settlement of the Native difficulty; and it is a gratifying feature to observe that the new settlers and the Natives are on the most amicable terms: the Natives are anxious for employment, and numbers of them are already engaged in helping to clear the land and other work in the Te Puke Settlement. We venture to hope that, in the event of your obtaining another block for settlement, provision will be made for combining with your settlers a fair number of settlers on the deferred-payment principle. We believe in no other way can the waste lands be so quickly reclaimed and made available for occupation and cultivation." If this application be granted, I repeat that I will endeavour to do my best to carry out any conditions that Mr. Rolleston may think desirable to impose.

7. *Mr. Thomson.*] What is the area of the last block you got?—15,000 acres. I forgot to mention, regarding the block last acquired, No. 3, that there are between 4,000 and 5,000 acres of swamp upon it, and about 4,000 acres of bush. The swamp and bush would absorb 9,000 acres out of 15,000, so until that swamp is drained—which work we are about to arrange for—we cannot get more people on the block. I am getting uneasy at the idea that the company at Home will send me out too many people, and that we shall not have land to put them on. By the last return from London I learn that 5,000 acres have been actually sold, but deposits have been received for a considerable quantity more. Thirty shillings per acre is the amount which we require purchasers to pay down, but they have paid less than that in order to secure their drawings. The land is all drawn by lot.

8. How many people are settled on your third special settlement?—The last census showed 92 or 100. The last census showed 508 at Katikati.

9. Have you complied with the conditions, at all events with the spirit of them?—Yes. The Ranger has reported upon Nos. 1 and 2, and the Government has written to me that they are satisfied with the way in which the conditions have been complied with. Every condition having been performed, the duty of Government has terminated. With No. 3 we have still five years to comply with the arrangements.

10. With respect to the large area of swamp which you say is in the block, do you intend to take steps to drain it at your own expense?—Yes. There has been some official correspondence about it. We have difficulties in the way of getting the drainage-works commenced—the drain has to pass through some other land—but I think they are in the way of being settled.

11. Are the people who have been brought out to the several settlements pretty well contented?—If they were not contented I do not think they would sign that requisition. They have always supported me, and there is a very good feeling between us.

12. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] What is the number of settlers who ought to have taken up allotments, and have been on the ground in January?—I cannot answer that question immediately; the agreement will show. We have some years to make up the full number. I think we were to have introduced 200 adults by the 1st January, 1886. At the present time a little short of 5,000 acres is being taken up. A good many of the adults are living at Tauranga till they can get the roads made and houses built, when they can settle comfortably.

13. What is the price charged per acre to the settlers themselves?—£3.

14. For good and bad?—No; they have got the best of the land. That land was valued by Mr. Percy Smith at £2 per acre, and we sold it at £3. He valued the bush land and swamp land at £1 per acre, which reduced the average of the whole area to £1 6s. 6d. per acre. We buy wholesale and sell retail. That is how we manage our business. I do not pretend to be a philanthropist.

15. You alluded, Mr. Stewart, to the New Zealand Land Corporation?—Yes.

16. Will you tell the Committee what will be your relations to that company in the event of fresh blocks of land being taken up?—I have been appointed sole resident director in New Zealand for the company. I felt when I went to England, knowing the amount of swamp and bush land there was on Te Puke, that, personally, I was perfectly unable to carry out the conditions of the agreement for want of sufficient capital. The New Zealand Land Corporation was formed; this new company consists of friends of mine; the directors have intrusted me with the entire management of affairs in New Zealand, and I am here to carry out the arrangements that are made with the Government.

17. Are you in a position to say that the terms of agreement, so far as money payments are concerned, will be completed in January?—Before January. I have a cablegram to that effect. In fact, I should not be surprised if the balance payable of the purchase-money next January should be received by the next mail. I am now speaking of No. 3 Block, Te Puke. I shall have no direct pecuniary interest in special settlement No. 4, whether the land is granted or not. The land fit for settlement in the vicinity of No. 3 is reserved for deferred-payment settlers, and the forest reserve. The deferred-payment sections are in the middle of my block; they cut it in two, and have the best land.

18. I would like you to state, for the information of the Committee, how much money has been expended by Government in opening up communication with this land?—Government has acted very well indeed. The expenditure upon the bridge at Hairini will be close up to £6,000; that work is as good as done. In the formation of the road between Tauranga and Maketu, close upon £3,000, to my recollection, has been spent; but, on the other hand, in the payments which myself and the deferred-payment settlers have to make, Government will receive close upon £30,000. I have to pay about £19,000 altogether of that sum. In all, between what has been paid and what will be paid before the roads are got into good order, about £5,000 will be expended. I have no complaint to make against Government for want of liberality. The coach-road is now being made through to Rotorua; we spent £600 on it last year; it will be the main road to the Lakes. The other road through the block is the road to Opotiki; it will open up a lot of land.

19. *Mr. Macandrew.*] What proportion of those 370 signatures are those of people who have been introduced by you?—I think nearly every one who signed has been brought into the colony by me. I have not heard of a single case of a man refusing to sign when asked. I may say the requisition was got up without my knowledge. After it was started, I was asked if there was any objection to it, and I replied "No." Katikati is not nearly such good land as I could wish. Pukeroa is not so good as Te Puke, but it is fair average farming land. Te Puke land is far superior to Katikati.

20. You said you considered the last agreement exceedingly stringent?—Yes; but I do not think there is anything unfair in it.

21. Would you be prepared to acquire this block you now seek for under conditions equally stringent?—Yes.

22. How many settlers do you expect will be introduced into the colony if you succeed in getting this land?—Our object will be to settle the whole block, and get as many settlers as we can. The agreement will provide that we must erect a certain number of houses, and cultivate portion of the ground—say, one-fifth—within a specified time. I think the present holdings are on an average about 150 acres each. The swamp land will have to be drained in the block we are now applying for—about 5,000 acres there is of it—and till then we cannot put settlers upon it.

23. How many are on Te Puke?—We have introduced to Te Puke fully 200 souls, but they are not all on their land yet; they are living at Tauranga.

24. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] You are asking for another block of land. Could you not apply when this land would be put up for sale; go in like any ordinary settler, and buy for your people whom you wish to bring out from England?—Well, then, I ask, where would be the profit? Supposing the land was put up by the Waste Lands Board in blocks of 100 or 200 acres, as that Board puts it up, why the land would be spotted here and there by speculators. We do not want speculators, we want settlement—we want people to come and live there.

25. Does not your experience show you that it would be better to establish a kind of agency at Home by which you would be buying here for settlers. Do you see any objection to an agency being established here, by which an agent would deal for purchasers, in connection with an agency at Home?

We do act as agents, but the returns do not pay the company for the trouble. Besides, this block at Pukeroa is swamp land. Supposing it were offered by the Land Board, speculators might buy patches here and there, and leave the remainder worthless. The object in these special settlements is to get people of congenial feelings and tastes together. One man at Home says to another, "If you go out, I will go out," and so people have some sort of neighbourhood.

26. How much did you pay for Te Puke?—£1 6s. 3d. We are selling the best of it at £3. What we are selling at £3 was valued at £2 by Mr. Percy Smith, who was agent for Government.

27. After the best is sold you have to reduce the price?—I will clear the bush, sow it down in grass, and sell it as improved land ready for occupation.

28. Then, what does your company do for the purchaser—what, beside the land, does he get from you—what advantage does the settler get from the company?—He gets no assistance, except that we make all arrangements for his transit, survey the land and cut it up. Surveying and cutting it up would cost £2,000. We bring them together in parties, and we find them ships. We want to have, if possible, two ships direct to Tauranga every year. We help them to make by-roads. Supposing

they collect £15 to make a by-road, we give them £15. I think it is money well spent, and it does not come to very much.

APPENDIX.

Copy of Petition of Mr. G. Vesey Stewart.

To the Honorable the Speaker, and the Members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled.

THE humble petition of George Vesey Stewart, of Katikati, Tauranga, humbly prayeth:—(1.) That your petitioner has been the founder of Nos. 1, 2 and 3 special settlements in the Tauranga District. (2.) Your petitioner refers to the success that has attended the formation of Nos. 1 and 2 settlements, as proved by the Crown Lands Ranger's report presented to both Houses of Parliament, H.—10, 1879. (3.) The first body of No. 3 party arrived at Tauranga last January (4.) Between two and three months after their arrival, No. 3 special settlement was visited by the Hon. the Minister of Lands, who expressed himself as both highly pleased and surprised at the amount of improvements effected thereon during the short time that had elapsed since their arrival. (5.) Several other families possessed of capital and income have signified their intention of joining this party (6.) Your petitioner begs to refer your honorable House to the provisions of "The Land Act 1877 Amendment Act, 1879," and trusts that your honorable House will recommend land to be set apart thereunder for the formation of a No 4 party (7.) Your petitioner submits to your honourable House that the lands of Pukeroa and part of the lands of Rangioru, in the County of Tauranga, are available for this purpose; and further prayeth that such portions thereof as may have been handed over to the administration of the Auckland Waste Lands Board, amounting to about 20,000 acres, may be withdrawn from the same. (8.) Your petitioner submits that, by a return laid before Parliament during the present session, the number of acres held by the Crown in the County of Tauranga amounts to 98,136 acres, and that consequently there is an ample supply to satisfy the demand. (9.) Your petitioner respectfully directs the attention of your honorable House to the objection that has been urged by some persons to the formation of special settlements, upon the grounds that the Government should undertake such, and realize any profit that may be thereby obtained; but your petitioner begs to refer your honorable House to the Jackson Bay and Karamea Special Settlements, which have not only turned out complete failures, but have involved the colony in a loss of upwards of £100,000, and entailed disastrous ruin on the settlers. (10.) Your petitioner further submits, for the consideration of your honorable House, the expense that has been incurred in sending to Great Britain special emigration agents, at high salaries and other allowances, without any benefit to the colony having resulted therefrom; and, again, Messrs. Foster and Grant have obtained 19,000 acres under the same arrangements as proposed by your petitioner, but in addition have received £1,200 for personal expenses, and it is also proposed to give them further concessions for drainage works at the public expense. (11.) Your petitioner, on his part, is now prepared to pay the value of the land, to comply with the strictest provisions as to the introduction of immigrants with capital, *bonâ fide* occupation, cultivation, building and other improvements, and to lodge in cash such security as may be required as a guarantee for the due performance of his engagements, and neither requires or solicits any pecuniary assistance from the colonial exchequer. (12.) Your petitioner submits that, from his experience in the formation of the previous settlements, and having an established position in the Home country he possesses the advantages of being able to attract that class of emigrants who are so eagerly sought after by other countries, and, by forming a combination of capital from Great Britain, with a fair proportion of colonials, possessing colonial experience, he can accomplish the most effectual means of settling the district. (13.) Your petitioner begs to submit to your honorable House that this petition is supported by the Te Puke settlers, the deferred-payment Te Puke settlers, and by the inhabitants of Tauranga and district, who have signed an application to this effect.

GEO. VESEY STEWART.

MR. G. VESEY STEWART begs to enclose, for the information of honorable members, the accompanying requisition referred to in paragraph 13 of his petition, which, by the standing orders of the House, he was prevented from embodying in his petition. This requisition has been signed by settlers holding various political opinions:—

To George Vesey Stewart, Esq, J.P., Mount Stewart, Katikati.

SIR,—We, the undersigned residents and settlers, Stewart's Special Settlement, and settlers on the Government deferred-payment block in the Bay of Plenty, having seen and experienced the benefit which this district has derived from the settlements which have already sprung up here under your auspices, strongly urge on you that you should, with as little delay as possible, endeavour to secure another block of land for the formation of a No. 4 special settlement. We understand that there are lands in this district, in the hands of the Government, available. We view with pleasure the great success of the scheme which has lately been adopted in the carrying-out of the settlement at Te Puke, namely, the combining of your special settlers with settlers in the deferred-payment principle, thereby securing mutual advantages to both classes of settlers. Some of the advantages are these: The deferred-payment settlers, with their colonial experience, take contracts and find work with the special settlers, whereby the new settlers reap the benefit of the experience of the old hands, and the deferred-payment settlers are the better able to carry out the improvements which their tenure under the Government renders compulsory. We need hardly point out that every addition to our population here assists in the settlement of the Native difficulty; and it is a gratifying feature to observe that the new settlers and the Natives are on the most amicable terms: the Natives are anxious for employment, and numbers of them are already engaged in helping to clear the land and other work in the Te Puke Settlement. We venture to hope that, in the event of your obtaining another block for settlement, provision will be made for combining with your settlers a fair number of settlers on the deferred-payment principle. We believe in no other way can the waste lands be so quickly reclaimed and made available for occupation and cultivation.

G. B. MORRIS,

[And upwards of 380 others.]