

WEDNESDAY, 8TH AUGUST, 1883.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

*Present:* Mr. Pyke (Chairman), Mr. Fulton, Major Harris, Mr. J. McKenzie, Hon. Mr. Rolleston, Mr. Stevens, Mr. J. W. Thomson.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

William Higgins attended, and was further examined on oath. (*Vide Evidence.*)

William Wilson Francis attended, and was further examined on oath. (*Vide Evidence.*)

Thomas Johnston attended, and was further examined on oath. (*Vide Evidence.*)

Daniel McEwen Fisher attended, and was further examined on oath. (*Vide Evidence.*)

The witnesses were instructed to attend at 11 the following morning (when they were discharged from further attendance).

The Committee then adjourned till Tuesday, the 14th instant, 11 o'clock.

TUESDAY, 14TH AUGUST, 1883.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

*Present:* Mr. Pyke (Chairman), Mr. J. Buchanan, Mr. Fulton, Major Harris, Mr. McMillan, Mr. J. McKenzie, Hon. Mr. Rolleston, Mr. J. W. Thomson, Mr. Stevens, and Mr. W. White.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Macleod C. Orbell, Esq., attended, and was examined on oath. (*Vide Evidence.*)

H. N. Hertslet attended, and was examined on oath. (*Vide Evidence.*)

On the motion of Mr. Fulton, *Resolved*, That, under the circumstances, it is undesirable to have Mr. R. Borthwick up as a witness.

The Committee then adjourned till called by the Chairman.

THURSDAY, 16TH AUGUST, 1883.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

*Present:* Mr. Pyke (Chairman), Mr. J. Buchanan, Mr. Fulton, Major Harris, Mr. J. McKenzie, Mr. McMillan, Hon. Mr. Rolleston, Mr. J. W. Thomson, and Mr. W. White.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

On the motion of the Chairman, *Resolved*, That the following resolutions be considered for presentation to the House:—

1. That the evidence taken by the Committee discloses systematic evasion of the law.
2. That the following recommendations be embodied in the Land Acts Amendment Bill now before the House: (1.) That every Waste Lands Board should be empowered to sit as a Board of inquiry, and to declare and enforce forfeiture and cancellation in certain cases. (2.) That for the purposes of such inquiry the Board should have all the powers conferred by the Commissioners Powers Act. (3.) That whenever, in the exercise of such powers, it shall appear to the Board (a) that purchasers at any sale have not purchased for their own use and benefit it may declare such sale null and void, and the deposit paid thereon to be forfeited; (b) that in the case of any licensee or lessee upon deferred-payment, who shall have held his license or lease for two years, and shall not have occupied his land *bonâ fide* exclusively and for his own benefit, by personal use, in accordance with the declarations made at the time of purchase, it shall declare such license or lease cancelled, and all payment made thereon forfeited, and the land to be Crown lands.
3. That, in the opinion of this Committee, the licenses issued to Charles Higgins, William Higgins, William Wilson Francis, and John Watson, in the Silver Peak District, should be cancelled, and that licenses be not issued to Thomas Johnston, Daniel McEwen Fisher, James Pearsall, Charles Webb, Philip Young, William Young, William Free, and Joseph McCaw, in the Strath-Taieri District.
4. That the evidence taken in regard to the deferred-payment land at Waikouaiti is not satisfactory; but that, owing to the absence of a material witness, who could not be found, the Committee has been unable to complete its inquiries into this matter.
5. That a number of other cases in which the law appears to have been evaded or otherwise not complied with have been brought under the notice of the Committee; but, owing to the delay which would have been incurred by bringing witnesses from a distant part of the colony, the Committee have not been able to make inquiry thereinto.
6. That your Committee recommend, however, that the inquiry be pursued, as there are grave reasons for believing that the evasion of the law so forcibly demonstrated before your Committee in the matter of the Strath-Taieri and Silver Peak land is being practised in several other districts; and for this purpose your Committee deem it desirable that a Royal Commission should be appointed to proceed to the several localities and investigate the matter.

Upon which, it was moved by Mr. Fulton, by way of amendment, That all the words in paragraph four after the words "at Waikouaiti" be omitted, and the following be inserted in lieu thereof: "is not complete, owing to the absence of a material witness, who could not be found."

Upon the amendment being put, a division was taken as follows:—

*Ayes*, 5.—Mr. Fulton, Major Harris, Mr. McMillan, Hon. Mr. Rolleston, Mr. W. White.

*Noes*, 2.—Mr. J. Buchanan, Mr. J. McKenzie.

So it was resolved in the affirmative.

*Ordered*, That the said resolutions as amended be reported to the House.

On the motion of Mr. Fulton, *Resolved*, That the Government be requested to give effect to the recommendations contained in the report, by legislation or otherwise, during the present session.

The Committee then adjourned till Friday, the 17th August, at twelve o'clock.