

Your Committee would draw attention to the hardship involved in the 8th clause of "The Naval and Military Settlers' and Volunteers' Land Act, 1891," compelling petitioners who have established their claim to select land in localities specially set apart for "occupation by naval and military settlers and Volunteers." Most of the petitioners are old and infirm, or already settled in business, and would, in either case, be unable to occupy profitably the small areas of land to which they have become entitled.

The returns before Parliament show that many persons whose claims have been admitted have received cash in lieu of scrip, whilst others have received land-orders only. Your Committee are of opinion that it is desirable that some uniform course should be adopted, and that debentures of the value of the award should be issued to each petitioner proving his claim, such debenture to be negotiable when used in lieu of cash on account of any payments due for rent on perpetual lease, or as cash on account of deferred payment, or for actual purchase for cash.

Petitions have also been received from men who did good service against the enemy, but who were not enrolled in corps entitled to grants of land for those services. Parliament evidently has not contemplated the creation of fresh claims, but merely the settlement of those which have been in existence, but have hitherto remained unsettled. Your Committee therefore have no recommendation to make on this class of petitions.

The case of the 18th Royal Irish Regiment and a few soldiers discharged from other regiments of Her Majesty's service has been under the consideration of the Committee, and it would appear that many soldiers of that, the last regiment of the Imperial Army which served in New Zealand, have been practically prevented from receiving land-grants owing to the fact that the exigencies of Her Majesty's service prevented their discharge prior to the 31st December, 1868; and, consequently, men who served for many years in the colony, and subsequently settled therein, have seen their fellow-soldiers discharged from other regiments (in some instances with less service) benefiting by land-grants from which they have been debarred. Their number is but few; and as there is no departure from principle (the date, 31st December, 1868, having been fixed arbitrarily), your Committee recommend that all soldiers who have served in New Zealand should be entitled to land-grants, if otherwise qualified, no matter when discharged, on proof being produced that they returned to and settled in the colony within twelve months from the date they obtained their discharge.

The Committee recommend that a copy of the clauses of any Act dealing with the recommendations of this report should be forwarded to each of the persons who have petitioned Parliament during the present session, either by formal petition or letter, and that a placard, containing instructions to all intending claimants to prove their claims before the Lands Commissioner not later than the 31st March, 1893, should be printed in large type and pasted on the walls of each post-office throughout the colony.

23rd September, 1892.

W. R. RUSSELL, Chairman.

*Approximate Cost of Paper.*—Preparation, nil; printing (1,300 copies), £1 2s. 6d.

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1892.

Price, 3d.]