

The GENERAL MANAGER, Midland Railway Company, to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,— New Zealand Midland Railway Company (Limited), Christchurch, 21st January, 1892.

I have the honour, by direction of the general manager, to forward herewith, under separate cover, a number of applications (139) for land, which the company desires to deal with under clause 33 of the Midland Railway contract, and to request that you will "forthwith cause the value of such lands to be assessed," as provided in section 2 of the above-named clause.

These applications can all be located by the Commissioner of Crown Lands for the districts from the information given. There is therefore no reason why they should not be dealt with at once. For convenience the Westland and Nelson applications have been divided according to lists enclosed.

I have, &c.,

For the New Zealand Midland Railway Company (Limited),
ROBERT WILSON, Engineer-in-Chief and General Manager.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

[Further lists of eight more applications for assessment sent 7th March, 1892, and of four more on 6th May, 1892.]

The general manager still keeps pegging away to move this Government, which now charges us with delaying settlement. Here is further proof of this:—

The GENERAL MANAGER, Midland Railway Company, to the Hon. MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,— New Zealand Midland Railway Company (Limited), Christchurch, 28th April, 1892.

Sale of Land under Clause 33.—The company has recently agreed with certain persons for the sale to them through the Government of small blocks of land, under clause 33 of the contract, and has given the necessary authority to the purchasers to make choice of the land, and pay the deposit and estimated cost of survey to the Receiver of Land Revenue.

The Receiver of Land Revenue at Reefton has declined to receive such deposits; will you therefore kindly have him and other Receivers instructed to carry out the sales.

The lands referred to are those which have already been assessed, and the Government has had more than two months' notice of intention to deal with them.

I have, &c.,

For the New Zealand Midland Railway Company (Limited),
ROBERT WILSON, Engineer-in-Chief and General Manager.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

Now, we see from the following letter that already for over two years applications have been neglected by the Government:—

The GENERAL MANAGER, Midland Railway Company, to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,— New Zealand Midland Railway Company (Limited), Christchurch, 28th April, 1892.

Applications under Clause 33, Midland Railway Contract.—I have the honour to point out that the company has, between February, 1890, and January, 1892, sent to the Government more than two hundred applications for western lands for assessment, under clause 33 of the contract, and without receiving any replies. This delay is quite contrary to the terms of the contract, which states that upon the request of the company "the Queen shall forthwith cause the value of such lands to be assessed," &c., and has already entailed much loss and inconvenience to the company and the public. I have therefore to again request your early attention to the matter, and that you will cause the assessments to be forwarded without further delay.

I have, &c.,

For the New Zealand Midland Railway Company,
ROBERT WILSON, Engineer-in-Chief and General Manager.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.

Surely this protest is expressed even too mildly; but what was the reply? Here is a fine example of red-tapeism and departmental delay:—

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the GENERAL MANAGER, Midland Railway Company.

SIR,— Public Works Office, Wellington, 25th May, 1892.

Re *Applications for Land under Clause 33 of the Midland Railway Contract.*—Referring to our recent interview on the above subject, and the understanding then arrived at in reference to the matter, I have now the honour to state that the Government is advised that all applications already received from the company for land under clause 33 are informal, as they are addressed to the Minister for Public Works instead of to the Queen, as required by subclause (2) of clause 33 of the contract, or the Governor, in terms of clause 49 of the same; also, that you have omitted to state whether the land referred to in the applications is to be sold for cash or on deferred payment, or to be leased, as the case may be.

I pause here to point out that this wonderful discovery has taken two years and three months to make. Does it look like helping the company to settle the land? But I finish the letter:—

To save the company any unnecessary trouble and delay in the matter, however, the Government is willing to treat the applications so far made somewhat exceptionally, provided that the company agrees to the following conditions, namely:—

(a.) That the company will, as quickly as possible after being informed of the value at which the land is assessed on behalf of the Queen (but only as regards such of the lands as are not within mining reserves already made or proposed, and have not been dealt with under any of the Mining Acts), formally request the Queen or the Governor to have the same sold or leased, and also formally notify the Minister for Public Works that they have selected the same under clause 33 of the contract, and advised the Queen or the Governor accordingly.

(b.) That all applications for land within any of the mining reserves (present or proposed), or land that has been dealt with under any Act relating to gold- or silver-mining, will be withdrawn.

(c.) That all applications with regard to which any complication may exist, or any doubt be held as to the lands affected being auriferous or argentiferous, will be advertised, if and as required by this department.

As regards future applications, I would propose (1) That the company's application to have the value of lands assessed should be regarded as a preliminary proceeding merely; (2) that on receipt of the Government valuation the company should address a formal request to the Queen to sell or lease the land referred to, and forward the same through this office for submission to the Governor; and (3) that at the same time formal notice of selection be given to the Minister for Public Works, as required by clause 29 of the contract.

Will you kindly intimate your concurrence or otherwise in these proposals as early as possible, so that the applications which are now waiting to be dealt with may be disposed of without loss of time.

Herewith please find list of applications for land that have been assessed. The applications numbered by company 682, 683, 684, 688, 705, 730, 742, and 793, will not be objected to if the company will formally ask to have the same sold, and duly notify the Minister, as mentioned in paragraph 1 on page 2 hereof. In regard to applications numbered 780 and 789, no objection will be offered, provided the conditions suggested by the Surveyor-General on the schedule enclosed are complied with.

As regards applications numbered 152, 476, 648, and 689, these are objected to, and, as arranged at our interview, should now be withdrawn.