

1904.
NEW ZEALAND.

LANDS COMMITTEE:

REPORT ON THE PETITIONS OF J. F. EUSTACE AND 201 OTHERS, No. 737, AND T. McKENZIE AND 42 OTHERS, No. 738; TOGETHER WITH PETITIONS AND REPORT OF THE PUBLIC TRUSTEE THEREON.

(MR. A. W. HOGG, CHAIRMAN.)

Report brought up 13th October, and ordered to be printed.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

THURSDAY, THE 20TH DAY OF JUNE, 1904.

Ordered, "That Standing Order No. 218 be suspended, and that a Committee, consisting of eighteen members, be appointed to consider all Bills and petitions that may be introduced into this House affecting the lands of the Crown, and to report generally upon the principles and provisions which they contain: the Committee to have power to call for persons, papers, and records; five to be a quorum: the Committee to consist of Mr. Bennet, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Ell, Mr. Flatman, Mr. Graham, Mr. Hall, Mr. Harding, Mr. Hogg, Mr. Jennings, Mr. Lang, Mr. Laurenson, Mr. Lawry, Mr. R. McKenzie, Mr. J. W. Thomson, Mr. Vile, Mr. Witty, Mr. Wood, and the mover.—(Hon. Mr. DUNCAN.)"

REPORT.

I am directed to report that the Committee has no recommendation to make.

13th October, 1904.

A. W. Hogg,
Chairman.

PETITIONS.

No. 737, Petition of J. F. EUSTACE and 201 Others (presented by Mr. Major); and No. 738, Petition of T. McKENZIE and 42 Others (presented by Mr. Jennings).

The Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled.

THE humble petition of the undersigned tenants of the Public Trustee under "The West Coast Settlements Reserves Act, 1892," and amendments thereof, sheweth:—

1. That your petitioners, being tenants of the Public Trustee under "The West Coast Settlements Reserves Act, 1892," and amendments thereof, humbly pray that that Act be further amended so as to provide for the option of the purchase of the freehold of their holdings. Such option can be given without doing any injustice to the Native owners, or depriving them of any rights, as (a) the lands leased are Native lands only in name—a sufficiency of land for each hapu has been permanently reserved for the use of the Natives; (b) the leases are perpetually renewable, and therefore the lands leased can never again come into the possession of the Native owners; (c) the Native owners have no actual will or say in the administration of these lands, as the fee-simple is vested in the Public Trustee, who has sole and absolute control, and administers the estate without reference to them; (d) that the Natives' only interest in the land is the receipt of the rents (less sundry deductions) from the Public Trustee; (e) that if the option of purchase were given to the tenants, the same revenue, with less deductions, could be secured to the Natives for all time. The rent is at present 5 per cent. on the capital value of the unimproved holding, and the right of purchase should be at such an increased sum (say 20 per cent.) so as to insure a return in interest equal to the rent previously paid. The purchase-money should be paid to the Public Trustee, invested by him, and the interest therefrom paid to the Natives.

2. That under the present tenure your petitioners suffer great disadvantages, hardships, loss, and certain injustice, as much of the district when these lands were leased was unsettled and unroaded; the lands were almost entirely waste lands, being bush, swamp, &c., requiring many years of labour and much outlay of capital before they became in the least reproductive, and there-