

upon the subject to be formed. The Regulations of January 31, 1872, are by no means attractive to the mere speculator, and appear to me to have been framed very judiciously, so as absolutely to shut out the possibility of the public money being wasted in visionary schemes, or in propping up "tin pot companies" called into existence simply for the spoils which may accrue to "professional" promoters. There has been in consequence a very determined "down" upon the Government scheme on the part of these gentry, who swarm upon the gold fields, and are not without their influence in the expression of public opinion through the press.

Although the Regulations referred to have been published in all the papers, and posted in every Court House, Telegraph Office, and Post Office throughout the gold fields, the greatest ignorance appears to have prevailed as to their provisions, and the grossest misrepresentations upon the subject have found their way into print; naturally tending to deter parties from further enquiry into the matter. I will cite one instance:—The *Mount Ida Chronicle*, published at Naseby, in the province of Otago, in a leading article informed its readers that "The Government claim a share in the profits of every enterprise assisted, in the proportion of the money lent to that expended, besides interest and repayment of capital." The fact that credit is given for the labour of the miner, and cash advances made in the proportion fixed by the Act upon the certificate of work actually executed, has been entirely ignored; and it has been represented that in order to obtain a loan of one-third of the cost of construction of any work, it is absolutely necessary that the other two-thirds of the capital should be subscribed. These misconceptions are being gradually removed, and I have no doubt that even within a few weeks the applications received will quite come up to, if not exceed, the amount placed by Parliament at the disposal of the Government for this purpose.

I would here point out that a very general opinion exists amongst the mining community that the limit of the advance to one-third of the total cost of construction of any work, might with general advantage be extended to one-half; and that Section 13 of the Regulations should be amended in the direction of leaving the repayment of the capital sum borrowed entirely an open question between the borrower and the Minister, to be settled according to the circumstances of each particular case. It has also been suggested that no interest should accrue until the completion of the works; and this seems very reasonable, as up to that time the projectors may fairly be assumed to have no income from the enterprise promoted by the Government assistance.

The section of the Act which renders it necessary that the approval of the Engineer-in-Chief or the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, upon any proposed work, should be obtained before the Minister is authorised to sanction an advance, places certain technical difficulties in the way of applications being speedily dealt with. This, however, is in a fair way of being got over, owing to the arrangements made by Mr. Carruthers, who will consent to accept the surveys and reports of professional men accredited by the District Engineers, or other Engineers of the department of Public Works, who may be resident in or near the particular localities.

Upon the general subject of the expenditure of the sum of money devoted to water supply, I would desire to remark that the intention of the Legislature apparently was, that this amount should, so far as possible, be equally divided amongst the several gold fields; and that in districts where assistance by way of subsidy was known to be unsuited to the requirements of the mining population, works for the supply of water should be undertaken by the Government. There can be no doubt that water is the great desideratum, and the cry is almost universal from every mining district, "Water is required to develop our resources!" From my own personal knowledge of our gold fields, I unhesitatingly assert that the sum of £3,000,000, instead of the £300,000, judiciously expended upon water supply, would prove an expenditure directly remunerative, and indirectly productive of such an increase to the population of the colony as would confirm us in a position of unexampled prosperity.

EXISTING STATE OF THE LAW RELATING TO THE GOLD FIELDS, AND PROPOSED AMENDMENTS.

The affairs of the gold fields are at present administered under *literally* six "Gold Fields Acts" besides others having special significance or influence more or less direct. These may be enumerated:—

The Gold Fields Act, 1866.	Otago Hundreds Act, 1869.
Amendment Act, 1867.	Otago Hundreds Act, 1870.
Amendment Act, 1867 (2).	Westland Waste Lands Act, 1870.
Amendment Act, 1868.	Nelson Crown Lands Leasing Act Amendment
Amendment Act, 1869.	Act, 1870.
Amendment Act, 1870.	Mining Companies Act, 1865.
Gold Mining Claims Drainage Act, 1868.*	Amendment Act, 1869.
Gold Mines Drainage Act, 1871.†	Amendment Act, 1870.
Otago Waste Lands Act, 1866.	Gold Mining Districts Act, 1871.‡

The necessity for a consolidated Statute may fairly be assumed in the face of such an array of Acts, which, from the variety of circumstances connected with their constitution, renders it in many cases very difficult to ascertain the existing law, a fact which has naturally enough proved a fruitful source of litigation, in some important instances resulting either in no decision at all, or in such as has been satisfactory to neither party concerned.

Before considering the question of the direction in which I shall venture to suggest that amendments of the existing law should proceed, I would briefly refer to certain principles upon which it would appear to have been based, remarking, *en passant*, where these appear to fail in accomplishing the object of settling a permanent population with capital and labour upon the gold fields.

* In force by Proclamation in the District of Ross only.

† Not in force in the Middle Island; requires Proclamation.

‡ In force upon the Hauraki Gold Fields only.