

REPORT OF THE OTAGO WASTE LANDS ADMINISTRATION INQUIRY COMMITTEE.

THE Committee appointed to inquire into the administration of the Otago Waste Lands Board of the said Province have the honor to report that they have arrived at the following Resolutions:—

1st. That the sale is not in contravention of the Land Laws in force within the Province.

2nd. That the Provincial Government, before proceeding to sell, obtained the sanction of the Provincial Council to the sale of 50,000 acres, in terms of the following resolution:—"That, with a view to place the Government in a position to provide revenue to meet the expenditure of the votes in the appropriation of the present Session, this Council resolves to authorize the Government to dispose of 50,000 acres of land, in one or more blocks, provided that no block of an area of less than 10,000 acres shall be sold under this resolution, nor shall any block be sold known to be payably auriferous."

3rd. That a fair price was obtained for the land.

4th. That the block in question does not appear to be of a payably auriferous character, and, so far, the sale was not in contravention of the resolution of the Council.

5th. That the evidence before the Committee as to the area of agricultural land within the block is very conflicting—the report of the Geodesical and Inspecting Surveyor of the Province being, "that for agricultural settlement the land is wholly unsuitable;" while other witnesses variously estimate the area from 1,000 up to 10,000 acres of land fit for agricultural purposes.

6th. That as to the policy of disposing of land in large blocks, the Committee are clearly of opinion that it is not to the interest of the Province or the Colony that sales should be allowed to take place as in the present instance; and that upon any sale of land, of whatever description, the opportunity should be given to the whole public of competing.

7th. That no land comprising within it any considerable extent suitable for agriculture or likely to prove auriferous should be sold in large blocks.

8th. That it was generally admitted by the several witnesses that lands unfit for agricultural purposes are the most likely to prove to be auriferous; and the Committee are of opinion that, in disposing of large blocks of pastoral country, the Crown should reserve to itself the right to authorize mining on such blocks, subject to reasonable conditions for compensation.

THOMAS LUTHER SHEPHERD,
Chairman.

Wellington, 22nd August, 1872.
