

2. Proposed by Mr. Tamblyn, seconded by Mr. Bennett, and carried, That this meeting indignantly protests against the sale of large blocks of land within gold fields; and that the General Government be requested to veto the contract entered into by the Waste Lands Board of this Province to sell privately, to the lessees of Run No. 199, 20,000 acres of land, as being a gross violation of law, and to take the necessary steps to prevent the sale being carried out, and to stop any further sales of large blocks of land within gold fields.

3. Proposed by Mr. Manuel, seconded by Mr. Tamblyn, That the Colonial Government be requested to take steps to place the members of the Waste Lands Board on their trial for illegally contracting to sell several large blocks of land within gold fields, and thereby wantonly sacrificing the public estate. Carried.

4. Proposed by Mr. Manuel, seconded by Mr. Cormack, and carried, That the statement reported to have been made by Messrs. Reid and Mervyn, with regard to the block of land applied for by Messrs. Cargill and Anderson not containing 50 acres of agricultural land, is utterly false, and without the slightest particle of foundation.

5. Proposed by Mr. Mackay, seconded by Mr. Tamblyn, and carried, That the Secretary of the Progress Committee be requested to communicate with the various districts, asking their co-operation in an appeal to the General Government to take the control of the gold fields out of the hands of the Provincial Government, with the view of having them either erected into a County, or the Colonial Government to administer their affairs, as should be deemed most advisable.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary,
Wellington.

JOHN M. KINASTON,
Secretary, Mount Benger Progress Association.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 6TH AUGUST, 1872.

W. A. MURRAY, Esq., M.H.R., in attendance, and examined.

Mr. Murray.

6th August, 1872.

The Chairman.] I am a Member of the House of Representatives for this Colony. I know the block of land referred to the consideration of this Committee. I am in a position to express an opinion regarding the quality of the land. It is what I would call first-class pastoral land. Only some portions of it here and there are fit for agricultural settlement. I am not prepared to speak as to the auriferous character of the land. Gold was not discovered till after I had left that district. A large body of water passes down the Teviot River, and I think it is absolutely necessary for some right to be reserved by the Government for taking water races through the land sold, both for purposes of mining and irrigation. I consider the principle of selling land in large blocks, to the exclusion of the small purchaser, prejudicial to the interests of the country. I think this particular sale will, to a small extent, have a prejudicial effect, seeing that there is a large extent of Crown lands behind, to which this particular land gives access. The sale of this particular block of 20,000 acres, being a frontage, might tend to exclude from sale half a million of acres behind it, if the Government should make similar sales of land on the adjoining runs.

2. *Mr. Studholme.*] What extent of agricultural land do you think is contained in this block?—There are not more than 2,000 acres, or at most 3,000 acres. On the higher parts of the block there may be some flat country, but then the altitude is much too high to make cultivation profitable.

3. *Mr. J. C. Brown.*] Is there no flat land situated between the river and the block?—Yes, there is some. The river frontage is reserved from sale. That reserve is only in part good soil, the rest being dry and shingly, and would be much benefited by irrigation.

4. *Mr. O'Neill.*] What distance is this block of land from Dunedin?—It is some eighty or eighty-five miles, I should think.

5. *Mr. Sheehan.*] Is your experience of the land founded upon actual occupation?—Yes, two years' residence.

6. Practically you occupied it as tenant?—With my brother and Mr. Musgrave.

7. Do you believe that it contains a larger proportion of agricultural land than is usually the case?—It is extremely difficult to form an opinion on that question. The extent of agricultural country varies so much in different localities, that it is impossible to answer the question. I do not think it contains a larger proportion than runs generally do in that neighbourhood.

8. *Mr. J. C. Brown.*] Is that block of land equal to any other in that district for settlement?—No; I do not consider it equal to the land sold to Mr. Clark or to Henderson's run.

9. *The Chairman.*] Is it not the next best for settlement to that?—For agricultural purposes, I consider that it is much inferior to that of Fulton and Henderson's run, adjoining.

10. In Fulton's run, how much land do you estimate is there fit for settlement?—I estimate that there is 10,000 acres of agricultural land.

11. What proportion is that?—That is a third of the whole run.

12. *Mr. Luckie.*] If this particular sale shuts up a portion of the country behind, to that extent it will be prejudicial to the interest of the district?—Yes.