

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.

It is suggested that a Roll of Assessors, composed of persons, holders of miner's rights, should be kept in the Wardens' Courts; and from such Rolls, Assessors should be chosen by ballot to hear and decide mining disputes. The Conference of 1872 clearly perceived the advantage of such a system, but overlooked the difficulty of obtaining suitable Assessors in the vicinity of the Court at the time of trial, as such attendants would, in nearly all cases, be interested parties or friends of either side. This recommendation, then, is not a contradiction, but an amendment upon that of the previous Conference. In all cases reasonable expenses should be allowed such Assessors, at the expense of the litigants.

AGRICULTURAL LEASES.

The Conference also wish to draw attention to the insufficiency of information afforded by the applicants, which is, in too many cases, an obstacle in the way of reasonable objections being lodged. They would recommend that all applications be heard by the District Land Boards, and that survey should in all cases precede hearing; that definite boundaries and precise localities should be clearly stated in the necessary advertisements; and that, where a suspicion arises during a first three years' lease that the ground is payably auriferous, a renewal of lease should be only conceded, and the Crown grant be withheld. The Conference wish to indorse the following recommendations of the Conference of 1872, as being especially wise and likely to prove beneficial:—

“For the better protection of the auriferous lands of the Crown, instead of the right of entry being bound up in the Superintendent and Executive, as the present law enacts, if such lands are required for mining, a clause that would act fairly might be introduced, conferring on the miner a right to enter at any time on such lands by paying a deposit of a fixed sum for each acre he includes in his claim. This deposit could be made large enough to cover any surface damages incurred; and, if successful in getting payable gold, the miner should be entitled to hold the land by paying compensation for improvements only, and nothing in respect to the land—the said compensation to be settled by arbitration. In the event of the miner not finding payable gold, on restoring the soil to its former state, and if no damage to the crops has occurred, he should be entitled to receive back his deposit. The evil of locking up auriferous land is just beginning to be felt, and encouragement ought not to be given to persons to take up lands in the immediate vicinity of gold workings.”

REVENUE AND EXPENSES.

Under this heading the Conference, while fully indorsing the protests of former Conferences as to the injustice of subjecting the gold miners to special taxation, and the equity, on the other hand, of liberal concessions and disbursements to mining industry out of gold fields revenue, wish, on this occasion, simply to deal with the excessive charges levied on compulsory surveys. Surveys of claims, it is thought, might be reasonably borne by the Government, or, at any rate, that the necessary mileage charges should be abolished, and especially the abuse of a surveyor being able to charge mileage fees on each of several surveys made at one locality at the same time. They would also recommend the reduction of the business license to £1 per year, as it seems unfair to charge what is regarded as the fee-simple in towns when no objection is made to a sale as annual rental in others, where, for practical reasons, a sale is indefinitely postponed. Business men engaged in handicrafts, or in the supply of dairy produce, should, it is thought, be exempted from the business license altogether.

CANCELLATION OF ABANDONED RIGHTS.

For the better facility of utilizing abandoned mining property, the Conference recommend that certificates for any privilege, not including water races, be liable to cancellation if not indorsed by the Warden within one year and sixty days from any previous similar indorsement; and that all such certificates should be brought to the Warden once in twelve months for such indorsement.

COMMONAGE.

The Conference desire to urge the necessity of preserving to the miners, in settled localities, a reasonable right of depasturing horses and dairy cattle. Commonages of liberal extent, sufficient to meet such requirements, should, in the opinion of the Conference, be granted, and the pastoral lessee be compensated when land is withdrawn specially for such purposes.

PEAT RESERVES.

It is again recommended that the provisions of section 91 of “The Otago Waste Lands Act, 1872,” be extended to apply to the issuing of licenses for the raising of peat for fuel.

ASSAY OFFICE.

The Conference wish to draw the attention of the Government to the combination of the Banks—a combination which tends to lower, unconditionally, the price of raw gold; and, as a preventative against such arbitrary proceeding in the future, would recommend the establishment of a central Assay Office in the capital towns of the gold mining provinces—the want of such an office being especially felt in the Province of Otago.