

1877.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEFERRED PAYMENT SYSTEM IN SOUTHLAND,

(REPORT ON THE WORKING OF THE).

Presented to Both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS, Invercargill, to the Hon. SECRETARY for CROWN LANDS.

SIR,—

Crown Lands Office, Invercargill, 7th July, 1877.

In furtherance of the instructions contained in the resolutions of the Waste Lands Board, passed on the 29th instant, a copy of which I annex, I have the honor to enclose the returns referred to in these resolutions, and in reference to the last of these to transmit a copy of the letter of the officer appointed by the Board to visit and report upon the *bona fides* of settlement under the Deferred Payment Regulations in force in this land district.

The first of these Returns, marked A, indicates the quantity of land set apart for settlement under the Deferred Payment System, the locality in which the blocks are situated, the amount already taken up, and that which remains available, with a memorandum showing what is now under survey for settlement, and which will be open for selection in about three months.

The return marked B shows the acreage in possession of each individual and the nature and amount of improvements effected by him. And here I would ask your attention to the gratifying fact that out of the total number of 82 individuals who have taken advantage of the system, only two have had their licenses forfeited, and five have abandoned their selections. Of the remainder the Board feel justified in concluding, that with probably but one or two exceptions, all are *bona fide* settlers. It is gratifying to find that no less a sum than £10,000 has been expended by these settlers on their selections as a glance at the return will show, and that there are no arrears of payment.

All this, so far as this land district is concerned would, in the Board's opinion, justify the belief that in the vast majority of cases there is an honest settlement going on, advantageous to the colony, and profitable to the settlers themselves, and yet circumstances occasionally occur which give force to a suspicion that the Act is not complied with in its integrity in all cases, and that a combination to defeat the residence clauses, if not guarded by evidence on oath, with its penalties for false testimony, may, at no distant date, introduce the paralyzing principle known as "dummyism." Again there are great difficulties in obtaining evidence; the inspector has no right of entry; the definition of residence is obscure, and his observations may not extend over such a period as to justify eviction, while the opposing evidence may be that of other settlers themselves before the Board on suspicion of not fulfilling the conditions of settlement.

In another communication of date quoted in the margin, I have, by direction of the Board, pointed out certain alterations in the existing land laws which, while protecting the *bona fide* settler who honestly endeavours to fulfil his obligations, would assist towards deterring speculators.

The Board desires me to add, that their attention has been for some time greatly directed to the necessity of guarding against an invasion of the law, and of thus giving completeness to a system capable of a large amount of good.

I have, &c.,

WALTER H. PEARSON,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

The Hon. Secretary of Crown Lands, Wellington.

Extract from Minutes of Meeting of Waste Land Board, Invercargill, 29th June, 1877.

Moved by Sir J. Richardson, seconded by Mr. Lumsden, "It being probable that the Government may desire information as to the working of the Deferred Payment System in the land district of Southland, the Chief Commissioner of the Board is requested to prepare and forward to the Honorable the Secretary for Crown Lands, a statement in the following form:—

- "I. The acreage set apart for settlement under the Deferred Payment System, mentioning each locality.
- "II. The acreage already occupied by settlers.
- "III. The acreage under survey.
- "IV. The number of defaulters and the causes.