

1881.
NEW ZEALAND.

WASTE LANDS COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF, ON PETITION OF G. VESEY STEWART, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE).

Brought up 30th August, 1881, and ordered to be printed.

REPORT.

THE Waste Lands Committee, to whom was referred the petition of G. Vesey Stewart, that land be set apart at Pukeroa and Rangiuru for the formation of No. 4 Special Settlement, have the honor to report that, inasmuch as the petitioner has been the means of introducing into New Zealand, free of charge to the colony a large number of a desirable class of settlers, the Committee are of opinion that every encouragement should be given whereby he may be enabled to proceed further in the same direction; with which view the Committee recommend the case of the petitioner to the favourable consideration of the Government.

30th August, 1881.

HENRY BUNNY,
Chairman.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 5TH AUGUST, 1881.

MR. GEORGE VESEY STEWART, examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] Your name is George Vesey Stewart, you are the petitioner in this case?—Yes. I have already been the founder of three special settlements in this colony—namely, Nos. 1 and 2, Katikati, and No. 3, Te Puke, all in the Tauranga District. In the second paragraph of my petition I refer to the success that has attended the formation of these settlements. I refer you to the report of the Crown Ranger, H.—10, 1879. In the figures which the Crown Lands Ranger has presented in his report of the No. 1 settlement, he values the improvements at £10,943. With regard to No. 2, there is a report from the same officer, which came in only a fortnight ago, and in which he values the improvements alone at £7,981. These two sums together come to close upon £20,000, and I know of my own knowledge that the value stated in the Crown Ranger's report was very considerably below the actual cost. In addition, the expenditure for the purchase of fencing, stock, &c., has greatly increased the circulation of money in the district, benefiting every branch of trade, especially saw-mill owners, carpenters, and people with cattle to sell. In reference to No. 3, I may say that the first party only arrived at Tauranga in January last. They came in the "Lady Jocelyn," and, though she is the largest passenger ship afloat, she was quite full. They were not all for my settlement in that vessel; however, I take the broad view of things—that, when people come to the colony with capital, it does not matter to me where they settle down. There was certainly some disappointment at some roads and bridges not being built; but I think there was no grumbling or complaining sent up, and the people tackled to their work under great difficulty. I can appeal to the Minister of Lands to say that, in the short time that elapsed after their arrival, till the date he was able to pay us a visit, he had reason to be gratified at what he saw. Even since the period of his visit, great and expensive improvements have been going on, and the special-settlers' presence has been of assistance to their neighbours. In fact, of the 3,000 acres sold on the Te Puke to old settlers, I do not believe there was £500 cash among the lot. They have no way of paying their deferred-payment instalments to the Government except by the money they derive from the special settlers. That is my strong point, and that it is felt as a strong point in the neighbourhood the statements in the petition in favour of No. 4 settlement will show. They want to colonize with people from the old country who have capital and experience, and who can assist those now in the locality, who have bone and muscle. I have really very little direct interest in this application whether it is granted or not: I have no direct pecuniary interest in it. I have a great interest in it in every other way, however; and I feel, like every tradesman, the more families in the neighbourhood, the more money to be circulated, and the better for myself. In regard to clause 5, that several families of capital and income have signified their intention of joining No. 3 settlement, I may mention that the "May Queen" has been chartered to leave London on the 25th of the present month. I produce the advertisement [advertisement read].

2. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] What is the meaning of the last line—that no Government immigrants are taken in the vessel?—Some people object to travel with Government immigrants; free immigrants is what is meant, and people object to travel with that kind of passengers. The next paragraph of my petition refers to the Land Act Amendment of 1879, under which the Government has power to set aside 100,000 acres in any one year for settlements such as I now ask this land for. My application is that, of the lands of Pukeroa, in the County of Tauranga, an area of about 20,000 acres may be withdrawn from the administration of the Auckland Land Board, in order to be dealt with as a special settlement. Of this area, about 6,000 acres consist of swamp.

3. *Mr. Thomson.*] That will be the best of it?—Yes; but it is not suitable for small proprietors. If sold by the Waste Lands Board it must be bought up by some one with money to drain it: it will be the best of the land if there is a fall. Part of this land is in the Rangiuru Block, but the ownership is not settled yet between the Natives and Government, but Pukeroa is now in the hands of Government. Government would have to withdraw these lands from the Land Board if they agree to this.