

think the Government are called upon to carry out such a promise, and therefore do not recommend that the claims should be admitted.

There is another case which we only notice to express our strong condemnation of the conduct of two officers and some men of the 1st Waikato Regiment, who have put forward a claim on account of town allotments, which they state were not granted to them in accordance with their conditions of service. On their being located at Tauranga in 1866, the Superintendent of Auckland, Mr. Whitaker, at their request, agreed to give them quarter-acre allotments in the township of Te Papa, which was not confiscated land, instead of one-acre allotments in a military township to be laid off at the Gate Pa. As the land in the township on the shores of the harbour was of much greater value than the other, which was two or three miles away, they readily accepted the offer, and yet, apparently in the hope that an arrangement made at their own instance sixteen years ago would now escape notice, they ask that the balance of the allotments may be made good to them. We think it a matter of surprise and regret that two officers who have both held commissions in Her Majesty's service should have been guilty of such an attempt to obtain grants to which they have not the slightest claim.

We have had to deal with a number of claims made by Volunteers enrolled between the years 1873 and 1876, whose title to scrip was quashed by the 3rd section of "The Waste Land Administration Act, 1876," which cancelled the rights of all Volunteers who had not then completed three years' "efficient" service. These men complain that the repeal of conditions in force at the time of their enrolment was a great hardship—that they took service on the faith of promises guaranteed to them by the law of the colony, and that the repeal of that law was unjust and arbitrary in its retrospective character. We find that this matter has more than once been brought before the House of Representatives, and in 1878 the Petitions Committee recommended that the rights abolished by the Act of 1876 should be maintained.

We have considered it our duty to reject all claims of this character that have been brought before us, but we think that the Legislature should be invited to reconsider the matter, and, if practicable, restore their rights to all those men enrolled before the 31st October, 1876, who subsequently, by continuous service, completed their five years as efficient Volunteers.

Should the grants we have recommended be confirmed by the Legislature, we would suggest that due notice should be given to each applicant that his claim has been allowed; that, where land has been awarded, scrip available only in the district where the claimant resides should be issued at the rate of 10s. an acre; that all scrip should be exercisable only by the person in whose favour it has been granted, and that it should be absolutely barred unless exercised within six months from the date of issue, and that a notification to this effect should be printed on the scrip itself.

Before concluding our report, we desire to state that the experience we have gained at those places where we have held our sittings has satisfied us that, to have done full justice both to the colony and to the claimants, it was desirable that inquiries should be made at every place where records could be examined. We might have extended our visits with some advantage to other places, but we were unwilling further to prolong our task, which had already extended beyond the period first named in our Commission. We believe, however, that we have fairly examined and determined, in accordance with the considerations we laid down for our guidance, every claim that has been brought before us. In carrying out the instructions contained in the 8th section of the Commission, we have searched all the Defence Office documents placed at our disposal, and the parliamentary records since 1875, to assure ourselves that no substantial claim has escaped our notice.

We have received willing assistance from all the departments of Government to whom we have referred, and especially from the Defence Office, where the records of many years back have with great labour been diligently searched. The Officers Commanding Militia Districts have also largely aided us; in particular, Major Stapp, of Taranaki, was able to furnish us with full and accurate information