

No. 373.—Petition of JOHN HOSKYNs, Christchurch.

THE petitioner requests an inquiry into the causes which have led to his dismissal from the office of Staff Surveyor in the District of Canterbury; he states he is anxious to undergo any reasonable test as to his ability, and that such test may be made under any other officer than Chief Surveyor Baker.

I am directed to report: After full inquiry into this case, the Committee do not consider that the petitioner has been unfairly dealt with by the Chief Surveyor of Canterbury; but, under all the circumstances of the case, the Committee recommend the Government to give the petitioner the opportunity of being examined in Wellington by some competent person appointed by the Surveyor-General.

8th August, 1882.

No. 119.—Petition of JAMES WILSON and Others, Kaitoke.

THE petitioners state that, in consequence of the northern side of the railway in the vicinity of Kaitoke being unfenced, great loss is occasioned to them by their cattle being killed by passing trains. They pray the House will take such measures as will prevent a recurrence of these casualties.

I am directed to report: The Committee are of opinion that this petition be referred to the Government for consideration.

9th August, 1882.

No. 78.—Petition of GEORGE MCGAVIN, Dunedin.

THE petitioner states that he sustained loss through the action of the officers of the Public Works Department supervising his contract for the erection of Waitaki Bridge, which occasioned delay in the completion of his work, and the imposition of a penalty of £500. He prays that compensation may be granted him for his losses and the remission of the fine.

I am directed to report: The Committee are of opinion that the petitioner was not entitled to compensation for the loss on the contract. The Committee recommend that the petitioner be paid the money held back as penalties, if the Government are satisfied that the work has been completed in a proper manner.

9th August, 1882.

Nos. 134 and 294.—Petitions of J. B. FISHER and Others, Wellington; W. C. SMITH and Others, Dunedin.

THE petitioners protest against skilled trades being taught in the gaols of the Colony of New Zealand, as such a system competes with and lessens the demand for free labour, besides reducing the social status of a large section of the people of the colony. They pray the House will grant them relief.

I am directed to report: These petitions are signed by all classes of working-men, and therefore are entitled to consideration. The lists of the petitioners comprise labourers, carpenters, carters, barmen, publicans, masons, printers, saddlers, &c. The petitioners were represented by a deputation of intelligent workmen, who were introduced by Mr. W. Hutchison, M.H.R., also by Mr. Bracken, M.H.R., who made a powerful appeal to the Committee in support of the prayer of the petitioners. On the examination of the members of the deputation, it appeared that they were not at all in accord as to the object to be obtained: some objected to youths being trained to skilled labour in the gaols; others appeared to desire that the product of work done in gaol should not be disposed of outside, so as to cause competition with free labour; others thought that prison-labour might be utilized in making ordinary articles of consumption, such as boots and shoes, for general use in all Government departments, from a policeman or volunteer to a member of the General Assembly; but that farming, flax-dressing, sugar-refining, and quarrying and dressing stone should be the general direction in which Government should utilize prison-labour, as interfering least with free labour. It was pointed out that flax-dressing and agriculture were carried on by free labour, and that the classes thus employed would also naturally object in having to compete with prison-labour. With respect to one of the new sources of employment suggested by the deputation, in which prison-labour could be economically employed, it was pointed out that a sugar-refinery was about to be established in Auckland. It appeared clear that each trade objected to any competition with the product of prison-labour, but had no objection to the prisoners being engaged in work for the gaol department only. That, having carefully considered the subject-matter of these petitions, and the special suggestions made by the deputation, the Committee are of opinion that the question is one which involves large considerations of public policy, which the House should deal with at the invitation of the Government. The Committee therefore recommend the petitions to the serious consideration of the Government, to take such action as may be deemed necessary in the interest of the colony generally.

9th August, 1882.

No. 128.—Petition of WILLIAM CONNOLLY and Others.

THE petitioners ask that some recognition of the service they rendered to the colony in 1868 and 1869, at Patea, may be granted them.

I am directed to report: While the Committee recognize the services the petitioners rendered to the district in 1868, the Committee do not see their way to make any special recommendation.

9th August, 1882.

No. 112.—Petition of J. W. Noman, Wellington.

THE petitioner states that he was committed for trial for perjury by the Resident Magistrate of Wellington in October, 1881; that the Grand Jury threw out the Bill, but he was put to considerable expense in obtaining his witnesses and legal expenses preparatory to trial, amounting to £68 9s., which he considers arose through the action of the Resident Magistrate in not binding over the principal