

1882.

NEW ZEALAND.

PETITION OF DEFERRED-PAYMENT & AGRICULTURAL SETTLERS IN THE PROVINCIAL DISTRICT OF OTAGO.

Presented to the House of Representatives 9th June, and ordered to be printed.

To the Honorable the Members of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of New Zealand in Parliament assembled.

THE PETITION OF THE UNDERSIGNED DEFERRED-PAYMENT SELECTORS AND AGRICULTURAL SETTLERS
IN THE PROVINCIAL DISTRICT OF OTAGO.

HUMBLY SHOWETH,—

THAT many of your petitioners have taken up land on deferred payment under the provisions of the law in force for the time being in the colony.

2. That many of your petitioners have obtained their land after competition at auction, and that, owing to the length of time over which the payments were spread, over competition, at a time when a species of land fever had seized the entire community, and a too limited area of land being opened for settlement, they have given prices at auction far beyond the real value of the land.

3. That many of your petitioners now find it impossible to complete the payments which they had, under the pressure of the circumstances detailed, undertaken to make.

4. That, when selectors are in arrear of payment, the Land Act contains provisions of a highly unjust and oppressive character, amounting, if put in force, to a confiscation of their property and the forfeiture of large sums which they may have paid towards the purchase-money.

5. That, in consequence, many of your petitioners have been compelled to effect forced loans to escape such confiscation and forfeiture, and, in order to give security for such loans, have been driven to pay up in full the remaining unpaid instalments of purchase-money.

6. That although these instalments are, under the contract, payable to the Crown only over a series of years, yet the selectors have received no rebate of interest for their immediate payment in one sum, and your petitioners are therefore now practically paying two interests on the same sum of money—one to their mortgagees, and the other to the Crown, for which latter they have received no consideration.

7. That others of your petitioners have taken up areas varying from 50 to 200 acres on the deferred-payment system, and find themselves debarred by the terms of the Land Act from completing their selections up to 320 acres.

8. That others of your petitioners who have acquired the freehold of lands held under deferred payments, however small the area, are also debarred by the Land Act from any further selection.

9. That others of your petitioners have taken up land without opposition during the period within which "The Crown Lands Sales Act, 1877," was in operation.

10. That it was a matter so doubtful whether the said Act really raised the price of deferred-payment land from 30s. to 60s., that the Waste Lands Board felt compelled to obtain the legal opinion of a Judge of the Supreme Court on the point, who advised that the terms of the said Act had that effect.

11. That some of your petitioners took the best legal advice, including that of Robert Stout, Esq., the framer of the said Act, and were advised to the direct contrary.

12. That your petitioners have been informed, and verily believe, that the said Act was not intended by the Legislature to raise the price of deferred-payment land.

13. That many of your petitioners selected land during the said period under the full impression and belief that an amending Act would be immediately passed, providing that the true intention of the Legislature should be legally carried out, and the price of land which had been selected without opposition be legally fixed at 30s. per acre.

14. That accordingly the said Act was repealed during the session of 1879, but the repeal was unfortunately not made retroactive.

15. That some of your petitioners have selected land which had remained open for a considerable time at 30s. per acre prior to the passing of the said Act, and for which no application had been received, and yet are liable to pay £3 per acre, although the price in these very blocks has again been lowered to 30s. per acre, and some of the land is still unapplied for even at the reduced price.