

3. Your Committee, having duly considered the evidence taken in respect of lands held under pastoral deferred payment in the Silver Peak District, are of opinion that the lands for which licenses have been issued to Charles Higgins, William Higgins, William Wilson Francis, and John Watson have not been, and are not now, occupied by the aforesaid persons for their own use and benefit in accordance with the declarations made by them at the time of purchase. These persons have bound themselves by an agreement with Messrs. Gellibrand and Co. (a copy of which is attached to the evidence) to depasture the herds of that firm upon the said lands for the full term of fifteen years, without power on the part of the licensees to determine the agreement or to remove the herds of Messrs. Gellibrand and Co. during that term; and the instalments for the purchase of such land are being paid in their entirety by that firm.

Your Committee have therefore to recommend that the licenses granted to those persons be cancelled, and the land resumed by the Crown.

4. From the inquiries made by your Committee into the circumstances attendant on the sale of deferred-payment pastoral lands in the Strath-Taieri District, on the 28th day of February last, they are of opinion that the lands nominally purchased by Thomas Johnston, Daniel McEwen Fisher, James Pearsall, Charles Webb, Philip Young, William Young, William Free, and Joseph McCaw at such sale were not so purchased by them for their own use and benefit; the deposit in each case was paid by the firm of Messrs. Gellibrand and Co., and the men do not appear to be in a position to occupy the land for their personal use.

Your Committee, therefore, have to recommend—That the action of the Otago Waste Land Board in refusing to issue licenses to these persons be upheld; that the licenses be not granted; that the sale be annulled, and the land be resumed by the Crown.

5. Your Committee have taken some evidence respecting the occupancy of deferred-payment pastoral land in the Waikouaiti District, but such evidence is not complete, owing to the absence of a material witness, who was not upon his section when it was endeavoured to serve a summons upon him, and could not be found.

6. A number of other cases, in which the law appears to have been evaded or otherwise not complied with, have been brought under the notice of the Committee; but, owing to the delay which would have been incurred by bringing witnesses from a distant part of the colony, the Committee have not been able to make inquiry thereinto.

7. Your Committee recommend, however, that the inquiry be pursued, as there are grave reasons for believing that the evasion of the law so forcibly demonstrated before your Committee in the matter of the Strath-Taieri and Silver Peak land is being practised in other districts; and for this purpose your Committee deem it desirable that a Royal Commission should be appointed to proceed to the several localities and investigate the matter.

And your Committee would impress upon your honourable House and the Government the desirability of giving effect to the recommendations contained in this report by legislation or otherwise during the present session.

VINCENT PYKE,
Chairman.

17th August, 1883.
