

SESS. II., 1884.
NEW ZEALAND.

GOLD FIELDS AND MINES COMMITTEE.
(GENERAL REPORT.)

Under Order of Reference, dated 1st October, 1884.

Presented to the House, and ordered to be printed, 6th November, 1884.

THE Gold Fields and Mines Committee have the honour to make the following General Report:—

The Committee are of opinion that the charges upon mining leases are out of proportion to their value, and should be reduced; and, further, that the conditions in regard to the employment of men upon such leases should be re-adjusted, so as to suit the different classes of workings.

In order to prevent the improper holding of auriferous ground without working it, the Committee recommend that, in all cases where the rent on a gold-mining or mineral lease remains unpaid for twelve months after due notice has been given, the lease should be cancelled, and that the ground comprised in any such lease should be reopened for fresh applications.

Section 102 of "The Mines Act, 1877," requires to be amended, so that the jurisdiction of the Warden's Court shall be more clearly and accurately defined.

The Committee deem it desirable that some provision should be made for the hearing of appeals from Wardens acting in their ministerial capacity. Many of the petitions which come before the Committee are of the nature of such appeals, which could be more satisfactorily heard on the spot, where necessary evidence would be easily obtainable.

The Committee desire to repeat the recommendation of the Committee sitting in 1883: "That an Act providing for mining for minerals other than gold should be prepared during the recess to apply to the North Island, in the same manner as is provided by 'The Mines Act, 1877,' for the South Island."

The export duty on gold is, in the opinion of the Committee, a most injurious and unjust tax, and should be abolished without delay in the South (or Middle) Island, and its abolition made permissive in the North Island.

The Committee desire to again urge the necessity of having the Wardens removed from one district to another periodically, and request the Government to carry this recommendation immediately into effect wherever it is practicable to do so.

With regard to the travelling allowances made to Gold Fields Officials, the Committee are of opinion that such allowances should be regulated upon the basis of the necessary extra expenditure incurred in each case, and should not be computed, as at present, as a percentage on salary.

The Committee believe that valuable aid to prospecting would be afforded, and great economy in the working of claims would be effected, if diamond-drills were provided by the Government, and furnished to the various mining centres. Such drills should be placed in charge of local authorities, and in the first instance they should be utilized by experts, so as to insure their proper and efficient application.

The Committee also desire to call the attention of the Government to the General Report adopted by the Committee in 1881—few, if any, of the recommendations in which have been given effect to—and to impress upon the Government the desirability and, indeed, the necessity of action being taken in the direction indicated therein.

And, further, the Committee urge upon the Government the propriety of an Annual Statement being made by the Minister of Mines, as was recommended by the Committee in 1883.

VINCENT PYKE,
Chairman.

6th November, 1884.