

The company prays—

1. That Parliament will appoint a Committee to inquire into its proposals, in order to settle all existing differences between the Government and the company.
2. That Parliament will consider the grievances which the company has in consequence of the action of the Government and the injury caused to the company thereby.

The Committee, having carefully considered the petition and taken voluminous evidence thereon, have the honour to report as follows:—

A.—The Proclamations reserving Land for Mining Purposes.

1. The generally auriferous character of the country through which the Midland Railway passes on the western slope has made it possible for the Government to reserve an area of land in continuous blocks exceeding what might have been reasonably contemplated by the company to have been reserved in this way. It does not appear to the Committee that in doing so the Government has exceeded its legal rights, nor has reserved or proposed to reserve more land than an exclusive regard for possible future mining developments may prove to be of advantage to that industry, but the Committee are of opinion that the reservation in continuous blocks of such a large portion of the land in the Grey Valley could not have been reasonably contemplated by the company.

B.—Regulations of the Government injuriously affecting the Company.

2. The company has had some grounds for complaint under this head, but the Committee do not consider them of such importance as to seriously affect the position of the company.

C.—The Delay in respect of the Lake Brunner Deviation; and D.—The Delay in Consent to the Incline.

3. These delays have arisen in consequence of time being necessary for the consideration of proposals by the company for modifications of certain provisions of the contract, but these proposals were made by the company in its own interest, the Committee therefore do not think the company can reasonably complain.

E.—The Refusal or Delay in Extension of the Time for Completion of the Line.

4. The Committee are of opinion that the time allowed in the original contract for the completion of the work was sufficient, but that, owing to the delays consequent upon the negotiations for modifications of the contract, and also owing to the many other difficulties under which the company has laboured, it is evident the work cannot now be completed within the contract time. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Government should grant a reasonable extension of time for the completion of the contract. In any such arrangement, the Committee consider that the Government should insist on reasonable progress being made with the work, and should endeavour to arrange with the company for a release of the land reservation not later than the end of the term of the present contract.

F.—Taxation.

5. The Committee are of opinion that with regard to general taxation the company has no claim to special treatment. The Committee is further of opinion that local taxation presses heavily upon the company; and the Committee desire to direct the attention of the Government to this matter.

Proposals for Guarantee.

6. The Committee cannot recommend that these proposals should be entertained in their present shape; to do so would practically increase the liability of the colony.

Conclusion.

7. The Committee recommend that any proposals which may be the result of negotiations between the Government and the company should be submitted to Parliament at its next session.

8. The petition and the evidence taken thereon, together with the documents and maps produced before the Committee, are attached hereto.

A. R. GUINNESS, Chairman.

8th October, 1892.

PETITION.

(Presented 9th day of August, 1892.)

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives
in Parliament assembled.

THE humble Petition of the NEW ZEALAND MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY (LIMITED), by ROBERT WILSON, its Attorney, sheweth:—

1. In the year 1884 the Parliament of New Zealand passed “The East and West Coast (Middle Island) and Nelson Railway and Railway Construction Act, 1884.” By that Act several advantages were proposed and offered by the colony to such company as should undertake the construction of the railways therein specified. By section 7 of that Act it was provided that the Governor should cause an area of Crown land for a distance not exceeding fifteen miles on each side of the proposed line to be withdrawn from sale, that such lands should be surveyed into rectangular blocks, and that the company, by alternate choice, should obtain land having one-half the frontage