

No. 86.—Petition of the MAYOR and Councillors of the Borough of Invercargill (and 11 similar Petitions as per attached Schedule).

PETITIONERS pray that the construction of the next section of the Orepuki-Waiiau Railway may be put in hand at once.

I am directed to report that the Committee recommends the petitions be referred to the Government for consideration.

18th August, 1904.

SCHEDULE.

No. 87.—Thomas O'Byrne and 13 others.
 „ 232.—George Clarke and 16 others.
 „ 303.—James Anderson and 19 others.
 „ 304.—Charles F. Sneyd and 23 others.
 „ 404.—W. R. Pankhurst and 78 others.
 „ 405.—H. Erskine and 20 others.

No. 406.—Roderick McKenzie and 18 others
 „ 407.—A. Templeton and 21 others.
 „ 484.—Walter Blakie and 98 others.
 „ 485.—J. J. H. McLean and 54 others.
 „ 486.—W. J. Scott and 30 others.

No. 231.—Petition of HENRY L. SHAW and 31 Others, of Leeston.

PETITIONERS pray that provision may be made for the compulsory closing for one half-day weekly, in Road Board districts.

I am directed to report that, as the prayer of the petitioners is provided for in a Bill now before the House, the Committee has no recommendation to make.

18th August, 1904.

No. 366.—Petition of F. NILSSON and 76 Others, of Kaipara, &c.

PETITIONERS pray that a wharf may be constructed at the Telephone and Pilot Station, Pouto, Kaipara.

I am directed to report that the petition be referred to the Government for consideration.

18th August, 1904.

No. 412.—Petition of S. RAWNSLEY and 85 Others, of Whangarei, &c.

PETITIONERS pray that a grant of £400 may be made towards the construction of a concrete or stone bridge on the Maunu Road.

I am directed to report that the Committee recommends the petition be referred to the Government for consideration.

18th August, 1904.

No. 370.—Petition of HENRY WIRGMAN ROBINSON, of Masterton.

PETITIONER prays that he may be granted further compensation or other relief on account of his having been retired from the position of District Judge at Nelson, &c.

I am directed to report that the Committee recommends the petition be referred to the Government for favourable consideration.

23rd August, 1904.

No. 544.—Petition of the PICTON HOSPITAL AND CHARITABLE AID BOARD, of Picton.

PETITIONERS pray that the Hospital and Charitable Institutions Act Amendment Bill be not passed.

I am directed to report that, in view of the Governor's Speech having indicated that the whole question of hospitals and charitable institutions will be dealt with this session, the Committee is of opinion it is advisable the alteration of boundaries as suggested in the Bill should be given effect to, and that the said Bill should not become law.

25th August, 1904.

No. 667, 1903.—Petition of GEORGE PETHERICK and 11 Others, of Wellington.

PETITIONERS pray that inquiry may be made into alleged irregularities in connection with the local-option poll in the District of Newtown with a view of preventing a recurrence of the same, and to secure the proper custody of the votes cast, &c.

I am directed to report—(1.) That the Committee has taken exhaustive evidence on the manner in which the ballot boxes and papers were dealt with at the last local-option poll in the Electoral District of Newtown. The evidence tendered gives strong reason to believe that the present irregular system of delivery of ballot-boxes to Deputy Returning Officers is unsatisfactory, and gives opportunity to remove or tamper with ballot-papers. (2.) The Committee finds that the ballot-papers at the Brooklyn polling-booth were repeatedly counted with great care, and, notwithstanding this fact, a serious and almost unaccountable difference was discovered at the official recount some days later. (3.) The Committee would recommend that great care be exercised by Returning Officers in the distribution and collection of ballot-papers and boxes, and particularly that the keys of ballot-boxes should never be left exposed or sent out attached to ballot-boxes without being fixed in sealed packages. (4.) The Committee would further recommend