

NO. 100.—PETITION OF W. LAMBIE AND 47 OTHERS.

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

THE humble petition of the undersigned respectfully sheweth :—

1. That your petitioners are the owners or occupiers under lease from the Government of property the value of which in the aggregate is between £250,000 and £300,000.
2. That your petitioners pay rates amounting to over £700 per annum.
3. That, in addition to the lands already settled and the coal-bearing country already proved, there are large areas of land in this district eminently suited for closer settlement and mineral development, and there are also very large deposits of high-grade limestone.
4. That the development of these lands and minerals is impossible owing to the lack of railway or even passable-road facilities.
5. That the only means of ingress and egress to the farms of our petitioners is from and to Nightcaps over what is known as the Manuka Hill Road, of which the first two miles from the Morley Village (adjoining Nightcaps) outwards has been made impassable for three or four months every year owing to excessive coal-carting.
6. That in order to get in and out with light vehicles your petitioners have been dependent upon the goodness of the settlers adjoining the road, who have permitted us to go through their paddocks, but ordinary heavy traffic has been altogether impracticable.
7. That the whole of the coal carted over the said road is consumed out of the district.
8. That it is not therefore the result of your petitioners' own doings from which we suffer, and the benefit of the traffic creating this (to us) impossible state of affairs has and will continue to be reaped (1) by the Government, from royalty and railage upon the coal, and (2) by consumers who contribute nothing towards the rates or upkeep of the road.
9. That two miles of the road which forms part of the subject of this petition was, six years or so ago, one of the best pieces of road in Southland, Government grants amounting to £900 or £1,000 and other moneys having been spent thereon. To-day it is a quagmire from one end to the other.
10. That there is abundance of good road-metal and gravel in the vicinity of the road in question.
11. That our many petitions to the Wallace County Council have resulted in no alleviation of the difficulties of your petitioners, who recognized that so long as the coal traffic is permitted to continue the only remedy (and that even a doubtful one owing to such extraordinary traffic and the nature of the country) is the laying-down of a properly macadamized road, which would absorb more money than the Council has at its disposal.
12. That while a tramway has now been completed and will convey the output of the two mines from which the carting has hitherto taken place, the Southland Land Board has recently granted nine coal leases to different parties on Section 20, Wairio, and section coal area, Wairaki Survey Districts, which leases are three miles further west along the said Manuka Hill Road.
13. That two companies having capitals of £7,000 and £5,000 respectively have already been formed, and a third of a capital of £5,000 is in course of formation, to develop and work a portion of the area comprised in these leases.
14. That amongst the conditions of such leases are the following: (1) Development expenditure (in each case) from first and second years to be not less than £2,000; (2) output second year to be 2,000 tons, and thereafter not less than 4,000 tons half-yearly.
15. That, there being no other facilities for the transit thereof, we are forced to the conclusion that practically the whole of the coal, aggregating over 70,000 tons per annum, which has to be mined from the area above noted must be carted over the aforementioned Manuka Hill Road, placing before your petitioners the prospect of five miles of impassable road in place of two, as at present.
16. That a scheme has been laid before the Minister of Public Works by the Wairio-Ohai Railway Extension Syndicate for the extension of the Government railway from Wairio to Ohai (the centre of the coal area hereinbefore referred to), which scheme provides as follows :—
The syndicate shall undertake to form a limited-liability company having a capital of £12,500, to be intitled "The Wairio-Ohai Railway Extension Finance Company (Limited)," or some similar title, having for its object construction, financing, &c., of the said extension on the following basis :—
 - (1.) The plans and specifications be approved by the Government.
 - (2.) The work of construction shall be carried out by the company under Government supervision.
 - (3.) On completion the Government shall take over and work the extension in the same way and on the same lines as if the Government had carried out all the work and as part and parcel of the Government railway system.
 - (4.) On completion of extension the Government shall hand to the company Government debentures, having a currency of thirty years, bearing interest at 4 per cent. per annum, for an amount equal to half of the total net cost of construction of the extension, including the costs of all lands acquired for the purpose of such extension, all charges legal and otherwise in connection with such acquisition, and including also all expenses connected with the survey of the route.
 - (5.) At the expiration of ten years from the completion of the extension, or such earlier period as may be mutually agreed upon by the Government and the company, but not sooner than five years, the Government shall hand to the company further