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T A S M Á N I A .

MINERALS ON THE NORTH COAST.

LETTER FROM MR. ALLPORT TO THE HON. COLONIAL
SECRETARY.

Laid upon the Table by the Colonial Treasurer, and ordered by the House to be printed, September 11, 1868.



Hobart Town, 10th February, 1863.

SIR,

You are aware that indications of the presence of Copper have been found in many places on the North Coast of Tasmania to the west of the Tamar, and that like indications occur in the neighbourhood of Port Davey.

Before Mr. Gould's late visit to Port Davey, he stated that if igneous rocks were found there in contact with those containing traces of Copper, it was not improbable that lodes of Copper worth working might be met with in the neighbourhood, but in the absence of such rocks this was scarcely to be expected.

It now appears that no igneous rocks were found at Port Davey near to those containing Copper, but such rocks are known to exist at many points between Port Davey and the North Coast.

It is therefore highly desirable that a search for Copper and other metals should be prosecuted in this direction; but no such search can be made with any hope of success unless a track is first opened, giving free access to this part of the Island.

To cut such a track, and to prosecute the necessary search, would require considerable outlay; and many years will probably elapse before the attempt is made, unless the task be undertaken by a public Company.

Partial search has already been made at the expense of individuals, but they have simply lost their money; and it will now be impossible to form a Company with sufficient capital unless some inducement be held out to Shareholders.

If the Government were in a position to promise land to a Company at a moderate price in satisfaction of their outlay, such land to be selected in the country explored and opened by the Company, the difficulty would be removed, and a Company with ample capital could be at once formed.

It may be objected that if under such an arrangement a Company became entitled to large tracks of land, they might appropriate all the mines they could hope to discover, and thus create a monopoly injurious to the community; but this might be prevented by reserving to the Government a right to re-purchase at a fixed price all the land selected by the Company, the price being high enough to ensure to the Company a handsome profit on their outlay.

I do not think it probable that such a right if reserved would ever be exercised, but the reservation would enable the Government to compel the Company to come to reasonable terms of compromise.

The Company, if they found mines, would naturally wish to retain and work a portion of them, and the Government would re-purchase the remainder at a moderate price.

If the plan I have suggested be thought worth a trial, application should be made to Parliament to give to the Government the necessary power to treat with a Company; and this might be done by giving the Government authority to offer land at a rate not exceeding, say, four acres for every pound expended by the Company in opening and exploring the unsettled lands in the Western Districts, reserving to the Government the right of re-purchasing all the land selected by the Company at a fixed price,—say, not more than £5 per acre.

If such powers were given to the Government a Company could be at once formed ; and, before terms were agreed on between the Government and the Company, the Government would have an opportunity of seeing that the management of the Company was placed in the hands of Directors whose character and position would ensure the careful and well-judged outlay of the money in respect of which land would be granted to the Company.

The land which the Company would thus acquire is at present of no practical value, and may long continue so ; and it should be remembered that such land cannot be made available without imparting value to all adjacent land belonging to the Crown.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) JOSH. ALLPORT.

The Honorable the Colonial Secretary.