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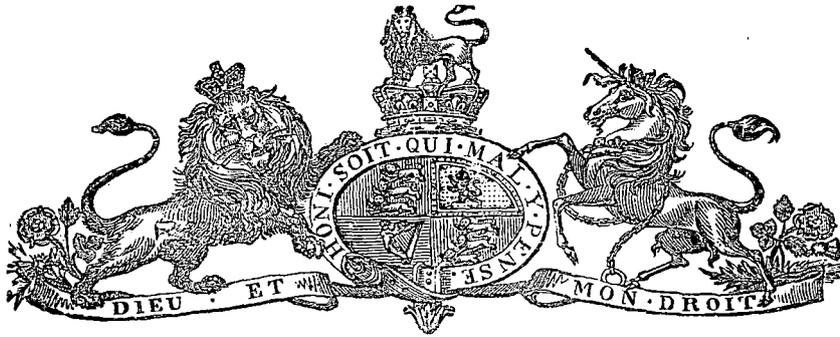
TASMANIA.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

GOLD FIELDS.

REPORT FROM THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE GOLD FIELDS ACT AND
REGULATIONS; WITH MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE COM-
MITTEE, AND EVIDENCE.

Brought up by Mr. Gellibrand, and ordered by the House to be printed, December
19, 1871.



REPORT of the Select Committee appointed on the 14th November, 1871, to consider and report upon the working of the present Gold Fields Act, and the Regulations under the same.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

MR. LETTE.
MR. THOMAS.
MR. ROCHER.
MR. JAMES SCOTT.

MR. DOUGLAS.
MR. BUTLER.
MR. GELLIBRAND.

DAYS OF MEETING.

13th, 14th, and 15th December, 1871.

WITNESSES EXAMINED.

MR. JOHN LEWIS.
Hon. W. D. GRUBB.

R E P O R T.

Your Committee having examined such competent witnesses as were available, and made such enquiries as the shortness of the Session and the amount of other business permitted, have determined to report the following Resolutions, in order that the Executive Government may be able, during the recess, to introduce such amendments in the present Mining Regulations as may be consistent with the existing Law :—

1. That the rent to be paid for a lease under the provisions of 34 Vict. No. 6 be fixed at Five Shillings per acre for the first twelve months, Ten Shillings for the second twelve months, and Twenty Shillings for the remainder of the term.
2. That the period during which lands may be held under lease should be extended to twenty years ; and that the time fixed by Section 112 of the Gold Mining Regulations of 1871 during which the minimum of labour to be employed on a claim is determined should be increased to twelve months.
3. That claims may be amalgamated upon payment of fifty per cent. more rent when two claims are joined, and one hundred per cent. increase when three or more ; but that in no case shall the total area amalgamated exceed seventy-five acres.
4. That Miners' Rights should remain in force for twelve months from the date of issue, and that holders of Rights should be required to register their right in such district as they have taken up their claim.

Your Committee would further recommend that this subject should come under consideration at an early date on the next Session of Parliament, and that a Bill should be prepared to give effect to the recommendations contained in the foregoing Resolutions which may be contrary to the "Gold Fields Regulations Act, 1870."

W. GELLIBRAND, *Chairman.*

MINUTES OF MEETINGS.

No. 1.

WEDNESDAY, 13 DECEMBER, 1871.

Present—Mr. Gellibrand, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Lette.

1. Mr. Gellibrand to the Chair.

2. Mr. John Lewis called in and examined.

3. The Hon. W. D. Grubb called in and examined.

The Committee adjourned to to-morrow at 12.

No. 2.

THURSDAY, 14 DECEMBER, 1871.

Present—Mr. Gellibrand, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Lette, Mr. Rocher, Mr. Butler, Mr. Douglas.

Draft Report discussed.

Adjourned until 10 A.M. on Friday, 15th instant.

No. 3.

FRIDAY, 15 DECEMBER, 1871.

Present—Mr. Gellibrand, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Rocher, Mr. Butler.

Draft Report read and adopted.

EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 13 DECEMBER, 1871.

MR. JOHN LEWIS *called in and examined.*

By the Chairman.—I have been for some years Mining Manager at the Clunes Mines in Victoria.

I was here in 1865 as a Mining Manager in Tasmania.

I believe the area of leases, 25 acres, is not too much.

The labour covenants in Victoria in the leases are 2 men for the first six months; afterwards, when the works are in full operation, the number of men employed is fixed by regulation. If gold is not struck, the mine is said not to be in full working. We have at Clunes 240 men at work.

It may take two years, with 5 or 6 men, to open the Black Boy Gold Fields.

Your regulation of one man per acre is too much after the first six months. You could not get that number of men to work.

After six months if machinery is employed it counts for men in Tasmania. Six months time is not enough here for opening a mine. I would not advise much machinery to be put up at first, but increase as you go on.

I should recommend that the Government undertake to supply water to the diggings at Black Boy. It would be a legitimate expenditure for the Government to undertake. At Clunes we pay at least £33 a week for water, and yet have only an insufficient supply. We are now laying out £40,000 to bring in water. We have a Commission appointed by the Government, in which our interests are duly represented by Directors; and the Commission charge a certain price for water, which by the charter is limited to a maximum rate of 9d. per 1000 gallons. It is supplied on a scale,—so much per stamp-head. 8 gallons a minute are required for a stamp-head of 800 lbs.

You have a first-rate fountain head and a good fall for the Black Boy.

Our lease was the second ever taken out in Victoria. We hold three different leases, but are not working on two of them. Government allow us to hold the leases because we have more men than are required for one. Our leases are not amalgamated.

I do not consider 10 years long enough for a lease: 20 have been suggested in Victoria,—in fact you name your own time, but not exceeding 25 years.

I do not consider the area too much; it is fair if the reef is on the surface.

It is difficult to amalgamate leases in Victoria.

Mining Boards are looked upon with great disfavour in Victoria. I could not advise a Mining Board at Black Boy to regulate their own affairs.

Miners' rights are all registered in Victoria. The number of the claim is placed on the miner's right, which is the Registry, and for which a fee of 5s. is paid.

By Mr. Lette.—I do not think the rent charged here, £1 an acre, too high. There is an agitation in Victoria to reduce to 5s., which I think is sufficient for a progressive mine; but after gold is found then £1 an acre. But the gold export duty was the best way after all.

Miners should decidedly be allowed to peg out their claim before applying to the Commissioner for a lease, whose previous consent should not be required.

It is, I think, undesirable that the Commissioner should have power to make bye-laws. He should be able to reserve water for domestic purposes. The power here is extreme.

Our Miners' Rights hold for 12 months from date of issue; and the same course should be followed here.

All our buildings are exempt from rates except the dwelling-house, office, carpenters' and blacksmiths' shops; and the area of the land is exempt from taxation. We have 207 acres, all of which is exempt from local taxation. We pay a rent of £1 an acre, and no police rates.

I do not think a man would put up machinery without a lease, which would be the best title to the ground. In Victoria, if a man puts in an application, the lease is drawn up in accordance therewith as regards the labour clauses and time of commencing operations.

HON. W. D. GRUBB, *Esq.*, called in and examined.

By the Chairman.—I am interested in mining in Tasmania, and am partner in the Derby and Caledonia claims, which have been worked for a year or more.

We have had from 4 to 6 men at work night and day on each of the claims.

From my experience I am of opinion that it would have been a waste of money to the proprietors to have kept on more men.

It would not have benefited us to have had one man per acre for the last six months, but an actual loss: in fact it would not be possible to employ so many without loss,—wilfully throwing both labour and money away.

It would have been a loss to have put up machinery six months ago. I don't think machinery should be put up till the mine has been tested and developed to a considerable extent. I know of most expensive machinery that has been put up at one place now lying idle and useless.

I consider 6 men for 25 acres ample for the first twelve months,—even for twelve months after the reef is found; and until the reef is found two or three men are sufficient.

I don't object to the rent, but I think it should be lower until a mine is developed.

I am favourable to amalgamation of claims, so that the rent is paid and the labour clauses complied with as if separate claims.

Amalgamations should not be revocable; the Minister in the first instance, before granting amalgamation, being satisfied that no injury would accrue to the revenue, and that the claims could be properly worked under the amalgamation.

I think there should be some provision made for giving parties the option of renewing their leases for a further period of 10 years on payment of a fine or higher rental. The power to take renewal should be vested in the lessee.

I do not think the Government should sell the land on the gold fields townships at present for building sites. I would reserve that for future legislation. I believe mining is only in its infancy as yet in Tasmania, and if it progresses Government will at a future day realise much more from such lands than if sold now.

Claims taken up under miners' rights should be registered by endorsement on each miner's right and with the Registrar, and no claim be recognised until registered. I have heard what Mr. Lewis says, and I endorse all he says on this subject.

It is most important that the claims should be registered, so that one man may not on one miner's right hold a dozen claims,—a proceeding which registration on the miner's right would prevent.

I do not think it necessary that permission should be required from the Commissioner to apply for and peg out land for a lease. Leases should, I think, be pegged out before application is made for the lease.

I would not disturb the area of 25 acres as at present fixed.

I believe the Regulations as regards machinery and labour clauses require alteration. Machinery should represent more labour-power for every horse-power. 6 or 8 men should be allotted for each horse-power.

I would most certainly not erect machinery without a lease, nor would I spend any money in opening or developing land under a miner's right.

I think the excessive labour clauses have had the effect of preventing persons from taking up leases, and they have acted injuriously on the mining interests and the Land Revenue of the Colony. Parties have lost their interest in claims after having paid their rent in advance to the Government because the labour clauses have not been fulfilled; the leases have been declared void, and the land, amounting to hundreds of acres, is at the present time lying idle and unproductive to the revenue and the public.

I believe that the Government would now have been in the receipt of a very large amount of rents for such claims had not the leases been declared void, and the labour clause not been required to be fulfilled, until application had been made by other parties for the claims to work them, and then only after notice had been given to the lessees requiring the same to be carried out within a certain specified fixed time. I am of opinion that some such regulation to the above effect ought to be introduced, and would tend to encourage the development of our gold fields.