



1856.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

Legislative Council.

GOLD FIELDS' MANAGEMENT BILL.

(PETITION OF MINERS AND OTHERS IN THE DISTRICT OF BRAIDWOOD.)

Ordered by the Legislative Council to be Printed, 31 December, 1856.

To the Honorable the Legislative Council, &c., &c.

The humble Petition of the undersigned Miners and persons engaged in Gold digging in the

District of Braidwood,—

SHAWENH,—

That your Petitioners have learnt with surprise and dismay, that a Bill is in course of progress through the Legislature, altering the existing regulations for the management of the Gold Fields of the Colony.

Your Petitioners have been unable to procure a copy of the Bill, but have reason to believe that, by one of its enactments, it is proposed to abolish the present system of collecting the Royalty due to the Crown by means of a monthly license to each digger, and to substitute in place thereof, a duty of two shillings and sixpence per ounce on the gross amount of Gold raised.

Your Petitioners submit, for the following reasons, that should such a measure pass into a law, it will inflict a very great and serious injury upon them, and tend to put a stop to the further development of the auriferous wealth of the district to which they belong.

Your Petitioners would, in the first place, respectfully point out to your Honorable House, that the Gold Fields in the neighbourhood of Braidwood are peculiarly circumstanced; the richest and most extensive being on private lands, the proprietors of which exact, in addition to the Government license, a further fee for permission to dig thereon.

That the Gold on these Fields, although extensively diffused, is but thinly scattered—large and rich deposits being now seldom or never met with;—and that, consequently, your Petitioners are mostly persons resident in the vicinity, who have adopted Gold-digging as a fixed and settled occupation; being contented with the small but certain gains they can thus obtain, rather than seek for greater profits at a distance from their homes.

That the Gold procured is of inferior value to that obtained in other parts of the Colony, averaging, after the deduction of Escort fees and Mint charges, only three pounds thirteen shillings and three pence per ounce.

That the imposition of a tax of two shillings and sixpence per ounce will so reduce this small price as to render the pursuit unremunerative, and prevent your Petitioners from continuing an employment they have long followed and become accustomed to, or will compel them to carry their labour to some other locality offering a greater reward to their skill and exertions, thereby entailing great inconvenience upon themselves, and a serious loss to this district.

Your Petitioners therefore beg that your Honorable House will be pleased to take their case into its serious consideration, and not pass a Bill which will be so manifestly partial and unjust in its operation.

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

[Here follow 150 Signatures.]