

1855, from Colonel Baddeley, Commanding Royal Engineers, to Captain Ross at Melbourne,—the latter Officer being requested “to purchase and transmit to New Plymouth nine corrugated and galvanised iron houses,” which, Colonel Baddeley states, “should not cost more than £150 a piece, or £1350;” to meet which sum, he directs Captain Ross to draw a Bill on the Colonial Treasury of Auckland, adding—“for the due payment of which I hold myself responsible.” This letter is countersigned.

“Approved,—R. H. WYNYARD,
“Colonel Commanding the Troops.”

On the 9th July, 1855, bills drawn at Melbourne through the Union Bank, amounting to £4591 16s. on account of these Barracks, were presented at the Colonial Treasury, Auckland. The Civil Government, having no information with respect to this demand, the Colonial Treasurer addressed a letter to the Colonial Secretary, requesting the instructions of the Officer Administering the Government, who thereupon, by minute dated 10th July, requested the Officer Commanding the Troops to state “whether he knew of the arrival of these drafts, and, if so, whether they are fully due, —and that the service connected therewith has been complied with and carried out.” The Colonial Treasurer’s letter having also been referred to the Auditor General, that Officer reported as follows:—

“This is a claim for £4591 16s. for Barracks for the Troops at New Plymouth.

“It appears by the correspondence that the expense authorised by the Military Authorities was only £1350. It would also seem that the Barracks were not required for the purpose for which they were purchased, and that the Engineer Officer holds himself responsible for the payment of the expense originally authorised,—namely, £1350. The question referred to the Audit Department is, what arrangements are necessary for the due acceptance of the Bills.

“In reply it is found that no provision has been made for this service;—that it is not shown that the expense ought to be borne by the Colony;—that it is greatly in excess of the amount authorized;—and that there are no funds in the Treasury but Land Deposits, which are not available for the Service.

(Signed) “CHARLES KNIGHT.
“Auditor-General.”

“July 11th, 1855.

The statements conveyed in the above report were not impugned by Colonel Wynyard, either as Officer Administering the Government, or as Commanding the Troops; but he writes that “arrangements must be made under any circumstances for the due acceptance of these bills.”

It is thus evident that the first step taken by the Officer Administering the Government, in connection with these Barracks, was to apply to the Military Authorities, as the parties who had ordered them, for information,—subsequently he ordered, on his own responsibility, the payment of their cost out of the Colonial Revenue.

When the Governor arrived in New Zealand (the House of Representatives having in the meantime refused to make good the sums required for these Barracks), His Excellency called upon the Officer lately administering the Government, to refund the sum of £4631 expended on them, until the Imperial Government had decided what was to be done,—adding “there is no authority in this country by which he could expend money disallowed by the House of Representatives.” After some time the refund required was made from the Military Chest,—it being understood between the Governor and the Colonel Commanding, that the question was to be referred to the Imperial Authorities.

With respect to this understanding, it is sufficient to observe that the Governor and the Officer Commanding the Troops (two Officers of the Imperial Government), whilst declining to take upon themselves the responsibility of spending Colonial funds, would appear to assume that the Home Government could apply these funds, the appropriation of which, by the Constitution of Government of New Zealand, is solely vested in the Colonial Legislature.

Colonel Wynyard, in his letter of the 11th instant, further states that the present Advisers of the Crown in New Zealand, admitted, by Mr. Stafford’s Memorandum of the 8th May, 1857, a claim for repayment of this sum to the Military Chest. On reference to that Memorandum, which relates not only to the cost of the Barracks already erected at New Plymouth, but to the cost of future Barracks, no such admission appears,—on the contrary, it is stated that the General Assembly having made no provision for these purposes, and the Colonial Revenue not appropriated by that body, being expressly appropriated by an Act of Parliament, it could not legally be applied to them.

The Governor, in his Minute on Colonel Wynyard’s letter, imputes to the House of Representatives other motives for refusing to make good the cost of these Barracks than those assigned in the Resolution adopted by the House on the subject. Upon the imputation thus conveyed by His Excellency, Ministers do not desire to comment:—it is sufficient for them, that, on the only occasion when the question of making good this cost was brought before the House, it refused to do so.

It having been shewn that the Barracks in question were ordered by the Military, not the Civil, Authorities, who were not even informed on the subject,—it is also to be observed that the Colony was not required to meet the charge of erecting and maintaining Barracks in future, for nearly two years after the Barracks in question had been ordered:—the previous correspondence on the subject of Military expenses chargeable on the Colony, referring only to fortifications against an enemy from without,—not to accommodation for Troops. To meet this charge from Colonial Funds, would therefore be virtually ante-dating by two years, the arrangement recently accepted by the Colonial Legislature.

Until the Legislature had intimated its opinion on the subject of Military expenses, the Ministry of New Zealand have always hitherto declined to sanction them, even with respect to the future; the