

have been unable to find any record of this. The facts as related in the papers and evidence are these:—

In the month of February, 1873, Mr. T. Russell made proposals to the Native Minister, "on behalf of a number of capitalists," for the purchase of the swamp and the construction of a road across it. After some correspondence, it was finally agreed, in the month of April, 1873, that the land, some 80,000 acres, should be sold at the rate of 5s. per acre, that the purchasers should construct a main line of road over the land to connect Hamilton and Ngaruawahia with the head of the Piako navigation. On the completion of the road, or on the expiration of two years, the purchase money to be due, and on payment thereof the purchasers to be entitled to a grant of the land. As payment or part payment of the cost of the road, and the necessary surveys, drains, and works connected therewith, an allowance to be made by the Government out of the purchase money, such allowance not to exceed 2s. 6d. per acre; proof of the expenditure to be made to the Government, and if the works cost less than 2s. 6d. per acre, the purchasers to pay the Government the difference in cash; the balance of the purchase money after this allowance to be paid in cash on the issue of the Crown grant.

It appears from the evidence that, subsequently to the conclusion of the arrangement, a Member of the Legislature (the Hon. Mr. Taylor) became interested in the agreement, though it does not appear that the Government, until recently, were cognizant of the fact.

Your Committee is of opinion that the issue of regulations under which it was intended to dispose of confiscated lands should have been precedent to any negotiations for the sale of such land, in order to place the public generally in a position to apply on equal terms to become purchasers; and the sale of these lands otherwise than by public auction, and under regulations previously published, is in any case, where Members of the Legislature are concerned, incompatible with the intention of the Disqualification Act.

In the present instance, your Committee is of opinion that the spirit, if not the letter, of the Disqualification Act has been infringed by Mr. Taylor's participation in the contract; but, as the circumstances are under the consideration of a Committee of the other branch of the Legislature, they refrain from further comment.

The sale of the Oroua block purports to be under the provisions of "The Wellington Settlements Act, 1871." A member of the Upper House (the Hon. Mr. Campbell) is interested in the purchase. The terms and conditions of the sale are described in the Order in Council issued on 5th September, 1874, which appears in the *New Zealand Gazette*, September 11th, 1874. The block of land which is agreed to be sold consists of about 22,000 acres, and the issue of the Crown grant is contingent upon the fulfilment of certain conditions over a period of years. The sale in this case is by the Superintendent of the province; but, as the conditions have to be the subject of an Order in Council by the Governor, the remarks made with regard to the previous case, as to the issue of regulations framed by the Executive Government, where Members of the Legislature are concerned, apply to a great extent in this instance.

The transaction in which it appears, from evidence given by the Premier before a Committee of the Legislative Council, that during the negotiations a member of the Legislature was concerned, and personally negotiating with the Executive Government as to the nature of the conditions to be imposed, is, in the opinion of your Committee, inconsistent with the intention of the Disqualification Act, though in accordance with the provisions of the Wellington Special Settlements Act.

The agreement with reference to the acquisition of the Murimotu block, said to be about 144,000 acres, in which Mr. John Studholme, lately member for Kaiapoi, was concerned, is set forth in a Parliamentary Paper, C. No. 6, presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency during the present session.

The agreement is apparently without legal sanction. As the facts will come under the revision of the Legislature before any effect can be given to the arrangement, your Committee do not consider it necessary to do more than report their opinion that the terms of the agreement, at the time it was made, involved an infraction of the spirit of the Act.

It appears, from Mr. Buckland's statement to the Committee and from documents placed before them, that towards the close of the Session of 1873 Mr. Buckland made an offer to the Colonial Government to dispose of his interest in certain blocks of Native lands for a specified sum, and then understood from the Colonial Secretary that his offer would be accepted upon his producing the necessary deeds. Subsequently, the matter having remained for some time in abeyance, a difference having arisen between Mr. Buckland and the Government about paying the 10 per cent. duty under the Native Lands Act, the Government finally concluded arrangements by which, on the 2nd April, 1874, Mr. Buckland transferred to the Crown, for the sum of £2,000, the deed of conveyance of 10,000 acres of the Oruanui block, bought by him from Hohepa Tamamutu and other Natives; and on the same date the lease of 20,142 acres, being the balance of the same (Oruanui) block, was transferred to the Crown for the sum of £50.

By another arrangement the Government agreed to purchase Mr. Buckland's interest in what is known as the Taharua block for the sum of £500. Your Committee have taken the opinion of the Solicitor-General with reference to this and other cases before them; they append this opinion to their Report. It will be seen that the advice given by the Solicitor-General is that "assuming that contracts for the sale of land to the Crown are within the Act (which, however, the Solicitor-General does not think was intended), then, if the sale or assignment was