

I do not wish to attach blame to any one. I am aware that the Government were placed in a difficult position because the Agent-General refused to act as an Agent with me unless my claim against the Government was withdrawn. I wish to say nothing against the Agent-General: he has a right to his opinions. But I ask the Committee and the House to say is it defensible that a man should be deprived of an office to which he has rights of a direct and implied character because he will not forego the claim which every person possesses of placing his grievances before Parliament? I had already told the Agent-General that it was to Parliament I wished to appeal.

As to the money compensation for the loss of this office: I submit that on the estimate which Sir John Hall led me to suppose I might place on it a very considerable sum should be paid to me in addition to the commission on the Five-Million Loan.

In this I ask only for the satisfaction of just claims.

As to a general recognition of the services rendered by the Colonial Stocks Act, and arrangements in connection with it, I do not ask for this in the present position I hold. Some day it may be voluntarily offered to me or to mine. I have referred to the services now only so far as they relate to the particular operations concerned.

I would like to add half a dozen words to clear up points which I have, I think, left obscure. First of all, this claim was never absolutely submitted to Parliament or a vote taken upon it. The Government brought down some resolutions in reference to future conversions, but withdrew them on feeling that the House was not inclined to support them; but those resolutions did not involve the negotiation of the Five-Million Loan or the commission on its conversion. In regard to Sir Penrose Julyan, that gentleman, a few days before the Five-Million Loan was to be brought out, having retired from his office as Crown Agent, telegraphed to the Government that he had done so, and that his functions with regard to the loan were at an end. I have not the telegram before me, but I believe he indicated that he would be willing to act in his private capacity. The Government, of course, immediately telegraphed asking him to do so, and Sir Penrose Julyan insisted that the remuneration he was to receive should be settled by the other Loan Agent before he consented to act. Hence it was that the commission was settled before the loan was brought out. That is all the evidence that seems to me to apply to my case.

Sir GEORGE GREY, M.H.R., examined.

*Mr. Turnbull* (to Sir George Grey): You wished to be present to ask any questions?—I should like, Sir, to make a statement to the Committee. There is one passage in the petition that bears upon the statement. It is this: "That during this period your petitioner became interested in and a director of the New Zealand Agricultural Company (Limited) with the knowledge of some of the then Ministry." I should wish to have the point cleared up.

*Mr. Turnbull*: I think you will find that the statement that has been published entirely clears that up.

*Sir George Grey*: I do not think so. I find that the statement relating to what is in the petition is to this effect: "So far as it relates to the Agricultural Company, the attack made upon me by the honourable gentleman was the most extraordinary and surprising that could possibly be conceived, considering his own relation to that subject. Supposing it came within my knowledge that the honourable gentleman had been unfortunate in sustaining some private loss, I should hardly think it a desirable or dignified course for me to taunt him with in the House; and how much less would this be the case if I had been the means of, or in any way instrumental to, leading him into the loss which he had met! The plain fact of the case is this: If the honourable gentleman had a proper conception of the view which would be adopted by nineteen men out of twenty, instead of taunting me in this House in that matter, he would have come to me with tears in his eyes and begged my pardon for having been the means, however indirectly, of leading me into that enterprise, because it is beyond a question that the honourable gentleman and his colleagues did put that matter in such a way that—I will not say I could not have avoided it—I was naturally led into taking an interest in it. And I will say at once I was not unwilling to enter into the matter, because I agreed with the members of the then Government that it would prove a boon alike to the shareholders and to the Colony of New Zealand, in being the means of cutting up for settlement, into small properties and farms, a vast extent of country which was scarcely peopled by a dozen human beings." Well, then, in addition to that, there was a statement made in Sir Julius Vogel's evidence to-day to the effect that I had only said, when I was asked to be a director, that I had no time to attend to such a thing.

*Sir Julius Vogel*: It was a statement from Mr. Stout's speech, made a few days before that extract to which you referred, Sir George.

*Sir George Grey*: Well, on that statement of Mr. Stout, I should say it is difficult to recollect the whole conversation after such a lapse of time. But I was taken altogether by surprise at such proposals being made to me. Such proposals had never been made to me before, and in the course of either that conversation or with some one immediately afterwards I was informed that a sum of £40,000 was to be shared between the promoters of the company; and that was said to me in the way that I felt offended within myself and tried to avoid further discussion at the time, and during the night I made up my mind that if any of the Ministers joined as provisional directors or promoters that I would break up the Ministry and would have nothing further to do with holding office. I wish the Committee to know that such was my intention. I believed the formation of this company was likely to be embarrassing to my own Government and to future Governments. I objected to the Agent-General being a director of the company the instant I heard it was proposed, and the telegrams read to-day will show that I at once took a very decided stand. I considered it was a wrong thing that our Agent-General should be concerned in a private company, and I made up my mind unhesitatingly to pursue that line of policy, and did so until I was turned out of office. That is all I wish to say.