

1886.
NEW ZEALAND.

PURCHASE OF STARK'S PROPERTY, NORTH SHORE, AUCKLAND

(PAPERS RELATIVE TO).

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives, dated 2nd June, 1886.

Ordered, "That all papers connected with the purchase, for defence purposes, of Stark's property, North Shore, Auckland, be laid before this House."—(MR. G. F. RICHARDSON.)

No. 1.

Mr. STARK to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS, Wellington.

(Telegram.)

Auckland, 22nd December, 1885.

HAVING now entered upon possession of part of my property for defence purposes, kindly inform me if it is the intention of the Government to arrange the purchase privately or otherwise.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Wellington.

R. A. M. STARK.

No. 2.

The UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to the RAILWAY LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 30th December, 1885.

Re compensation for land taken for defence purposes: Will you please wait upon Mr. R. A. M. Stark and try to arrange compensation at an early date, subject, as usual, to Minister's approval. Mr. Stark is wiring about the matter.

H. M. Brewer, Esq., Land Purchase Officer, Auckland.

C. Y. O'CONNOR.

No. 3.

The UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to Mr. STARK, Auckland.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 30th December, 1885.

IN reply, *re* compensation for land taken for defence purposes, Mr. Brewer, the Government Land Purchase Officer, has been instructed to wait upon you with the view of endeavouring to arrange compensation privately if possible.

R. A. M. Stark, Esq., Auckland.

C. Y. O'CONNOR,
Under-Secretary for Public Works.

No. 4.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

(Telegram.)

Auckland, 8th January, 1886.

TAKAPUNA Battery-site: This is a very serious affair; we entirely destroy Stark's property. I saw him yesterday, with Brewer. I am of opinion that Government will have to take whole property, and afterwards sell what is not required—twenty-three acres in all, value said to be twenty thousand. Hon. Mr. Ballance wires me that he wishes me to take matter in hand and do as I think best. Who do you think should be asked to value? Has any Proclamation been issued?

C. Y. O'Connor, Esq., Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington.

E. RICHARDSON,

No. 5.

The UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 8th January, 1886.

In reply, *re* Takapuna Battery-site: No Proclamation has been issued as yet I would recommend that one or two auctioneers or land agents of high standing in Auckland should be associated with Mr. Brewer in making the valuation. In the event of case going into Court hereafter their evidence would be useful. Had just got notices ready for newspaper defining portion of land intended to be taken, but presume these will be cancelled now, as you intend to take the whole property. The following have been suggested as trustworthy persons to choose from to make valuation: Mr. William Aitken, Mr. Joseph Newman, Mr. Alfred Buckland, and (if not debarred by being member of Parliament) Mr. F. J. Moss.

Hon. E. Richardson, Minister for Public Works, Auckland.

C. Y. O'CONNOR.

No. 6.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

(Telegram.)

Auckland, 12th January, 1886.

CONFIDENTIAL. Takapuna Battery-site: Stark states that Government valuator's value for property-tax purposes is fifteen thousand five hundred. Endeavour ascertain from Sperrey confidentially what Government valuation was. I have promised to give definite instructions what Brewer is to do on my return to Auckland next Monday. It appears to me that we should take the whole property; and, as there is so wide a difference as to value, we had better call upon him to make his claim, and then go straight to Compensation Court. Do I understand you that Moss, M.H.R., can act as assessor or valuator, and be paid for same, without breach of Disqualification Act? If so, I will instruct Brewer get valuations made by Aitken and Moss. Cambridge to-morrow night.

E. RICHARDSON.

C. Y. O'Connor, Esq., Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington.

No. 7.

The UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 12th January, 1886.

CONFIDENTIAL. In reply, *re* Takapuna battery-site: Mr. Sperrey says that the present property-tax value of the whole property—namely, twenty-eight acres and the improvements thereon—is fifteen thousand six hundred pounds, and that the estimated letting value is five hundred pounds a year. The value of the improvements alone is estimated at four thousand four hundred pounds. Mr. Sperrey also says that the property has increased in value very much during the last two or three years, in proof of which he states that in 1882 forty-two acres, of which this twenty-eight acres then formed a portion, was only valued at four thousand five hundred pounds. The property-tax valuation is by Mr. Thomas Seaman, whom Mr. Sperrey considers the best valuator in Auckland. As regards Mr. Moss acting as valuator, I am inclined to think, after looking at the Disqualification Act, that he might be running some risk; so that it would perhaps be better not to ask him.

Hon. E. Richardson, Minister for Public Works, Auckland.

C. Y. O'CONNOR.

No. 8.

The PROPERTY-TAX COMMISSIONER to Mr. SEAMAN, Property-tax Valuator, Auckland.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 13th January, 1886.

Re R. A. M. Stark's property, Devonport, 28 acres 1 rood 16 perches, valued at £15,600: Adjoining property, 1 to 8, part 4, three and a half acres, valued at £1,000. Former £400 per acre without improvements, latter less than £300. Stark's property wanted by Government. Please explain discrepancy.

Thomas Seaman, Esq., Auckland.

J. SPERREY.

No. 9.

The PROPERTY-TAX VALUATOR, Auckland, to the PROPERTY-TAX COMMISSIONER.

(Telegram.)

Auckland, 13th January, 1886.

I CONSIDER Stark's land worth fully £100 more per acre than Hammond's, being much more available for cutting up into building sections, and having much more commanding view. I know that the former has been offered £16,000 for the property.

The Property-tax Commissioner, Wellington.

THOMAS SEAMAN,
Assessor.

No. 10.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

(Telegram.)

Cambridge, 13th January, 1886.

BATTERY site: I will attend to this on return to Auckland.

C. Y. O'Connor, Esq., Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington.

E. RICHARDSON.

No. 11.

FORM OF CLAIM TO COMPENSATION WHERE LANDS ARE TAKEN.—Under the authority of “The Public Works Act, 1882.”

To the Hon. the Minister for Public Works.

WHEREAS by a Proclamation by His Excellency the Governor of New Zealand, dated the day of _____, 188____, the lands specified below were taken for the purpose of a battery, and were vested in Her Majesty, and I have an interest in such land as owner: This is to give notice that I claim the sum of £20,000 as compensation for all loss and damage done to me arising out of the taking of the said land.

Given under my hand, at Auckland, this nineteenth day of January, 1886.

R. A. M. STARK, Claimant.

Description of Land taken: Section 3, and part 4, section 2, Parish of Takapuna, County of Eden, 28 acres and 16 perches.

No. 12.

The RAILWAY LAND PURCHASE OFFICER to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

Public Works Office, Auckland, 20th January, 1886.

SIR,—

Re *Land at Takapuna taken for a Battery.*

I have been to the North Shore, and got all the information possible *re* value of land there.

I find a great deal of land is selling at so much per foot, and that Mr. Stark's property could be cut up so as to give 8,300ft. of frontage. A person who has cut up his land into sections next to Mr. Stark's is asking £4 per foot frontage, and various other properties changed hands at from £2 10s. to £6 per foot. I find also that Professor Thomas, who has just bought a property next to Mr. Stark, gave at the rate of £600 per acre for it. Mr. Stark's property consists of 28 acres and 16 perches. This, at the same rate, would be £16,800; while the buildings, &c., are worth about £3,500. My idea is that Mr. Stark should be offered £17,500. This would be 10 per cent. over the property-tax valuation, and a little allowance for compulsory-taking and necessary expenses that he will be put to through leaving, &c. I do not think Mr Stark will agree to this; but, if he will do so, I consider the Government will get the property at a moderate price.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works,
Auckland.

H. M. BREWER,
Land Purchase Officer.

No. 13.

The RAILWAY LAND PURCHASE OFFICER to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

(Memorandum.) Public Works Office, Auckland, 20th January, 1886.

SHOULD the Government decide upon taking the whole of Mr. Stark's property, I would advise that, instead of taking it by Proclamation, it should be taken by conveyance. The property is under the Land Transfer Act, and the expense would be small; while, if taken by Proclamation, a special survey would have to be made, and other expenses incurred.

H. M. BREWER,

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works, Auckland.

Land Purchase Officer.

No. 14.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to Mr. STARK.

SIR,—

Public Works Office, Auckland, 20th January, 1886.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this date, in which you claim £20,000 for your property as described therein, containing 28 acres and 16 perches, together with house and improvements, and all your interest in same. Referring to the several interviews we have had on this subject, I now, without prejudice, have, on behalf of the Government, to offer you the sum of £17,100 for the said property—this amount to cover all claims of every sort whatever you may have against the Government in connection with this land, and to be paid to you as soon as a good and complete title is given by you to the satisfaction of the Law Officers of the Government.

I have, &c.,

R. A. M. Stark, Esq., Auckland.

EDWARD RICHARDSON.

No. 15.

The RAILWAY LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland, to the UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

(Telegram.)

Public Works Office, Auckland, 22nd January, 1886.

ENCLOSED I forward Mr. Stark's acceptance of the Government offer for land taken for battery at Takapuna. The negotiations for the purchase of this property have been conducted entirely by the Hon. the Minister for Public Works and Mr. Stark, and I have had nothing to do with the settlement, so I have no report or valuation to forward. In accordance with instructions received from the Minister, I have forwarded voucher to Mr. Buddle, and requested him to report upon title and make out conveyance.

H. M. BREWER,

Land Purchase Officer.

C. Y. O'Connor, Esq., Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington.

Enclosure.

Mr. STARK to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Auckland, 21st January, 1886.

I have the honour to acknowledge your communication of yesterday—20th January, 1886—relative to my claim against the Government for £20,000 for my property at the North Shore, containing 28 acres and 16 perches, being Allotment 3 and part of Allotment 4 of Section 2, Parish of Takapuna, and containing an offer on behalf of the Government to pay me £17,100 for the said property and in satisfaction of all claims and demands against the Government in connection with the property. In reply, I beg to state that I hereby accept your offer of £17,100 in terms of your letter.

The Hon. E. Richardson, Minister for Public Works,
Auckland.

I have, &c.,
R. A. M. STARK.

No. 16.

The RAILWAY LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland, to the UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

(Telegram.)

Public Works Office, Auckland, 23rd January, 1886.

Re land for Takapuna Battery: Enclosed I forward voucher in favour of Mr. R. A. M. Stark for £17,100, together with solicitor's memorandum thereon. Transfer has been prepared by Government solicitor, and signed by Mr. Stark.

H. M. BREWER,
Land Purchase Officer.

C. Y. O'Connor, Esq., Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington.

Enclosure.

Mr. THOS. BUDDLE to the RAILWAY LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland.

5, Wyndham Street, Auckland, 22nd January, 1886.

STARK to the Queen: I have prepared transfer herein, and sent same to Mr. W. Coleman (Mr. Stark's solicitor) for execution.

P.S.—Voucher returned herewith.
H. M. Brewer, Esq., Auckland.

THOMAS BUDDLE.

No. 17.

Mr. R. A. M. STARK, Auckland, to the UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

(Telegram.)

Auckland, 10th February, 1886.

KINDLY inform me when money for land taken for battery will be sent up. I accepted Ministers' terms, several thousands less than value, on the distinct understanding, in writing, that money should be paid at once. I signed conveyance of property nearly three weeks ago.

The Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington.

R. A. M. STARK.

No. 18.

The UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to Mr. R. A. M. STARK.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 11th February, 1886.

IN reply, *re* land at Takapuna: Treasury will post cheque to-morrow.

R. A. M. Stark, Esq., Auckland.

C. Y. O'CONNOR.

No. 19.

The RAILWAY LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland, to the UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

(Telegram.)

Public Works Office, Auckland, 15th February, 1886.

ENCLOSED I forward voucher in favour of Mr. R. A. M. Stark for £17,100, signed and accepted.

H. A. M. BREWER,
Land Purchase Officer.

C. Y. O'Connor, Esq., Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington.

No. 20.

Mr. STARK, Auckland, to the UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

(Telegram.)

Auckland, 20th February, 1886.

As the residence, Takapuna Point, may be placed at the disposal of a high personage, it occurred to me it would be a pity to disturb the furniture. I will deal very liberally with the Government, if they wish to purchase furniture, Venetian blinds, china, plate, napery, garden-tools, large stock fire-wood, &c.—the whole a going concern. An inventory could be taken by your Engineer, and your care-taker could step in when we leave. Please let me know if the Government wish to make the purchase.

The Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington.

R. A. M. STARK.

No. 21.

The UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to Mr. R. A. M. STARK, Auckland.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 23rd February, 1886.

IN reply, *re* furniture in residence at Takapuna Point: Hon. Mr. Richardson directs me to thank you for your offer, and to state that Mr. Brewer, the Government Land Purchase Officer, will be instructed to see you, and, if you desire it, to value and take over the Venetian blinds in the house; but, as regards the other furniture, Government does not see its way to purchase it.

R. A. M. Stark, Esq., Auckland.

C. Y. O'CONNOR.

No. 22.

The UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to the RAILWAY LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 23rd February, 1886.

MR. STARK has telegraphed offering to sell to Government the Venetian blinds and furniture in the residence at Takapuna. Minister approves purchase of blinds, but not other furniture; and Mr. Stark has been informed accordingly. Will you therefore please see him, and, if he so chooses, inspect the blinds, and arrange with Mr. Stark the price which is to be paid for them, and take them over on behalf of the Government, Mr. Stark removing all other furniture.

H. M. Brewer, Esq., Land Purchase Officer, Auckland.

C. Y. O'CONNOR.

No. 23.

DEPARTMENTAL MINUTE ON CORRESPONDENCE.

MR. O'CONNOR.—The purchase of the 28 acres and 16 perches of land from Mr. Stark being now completed, instructions are requested as to what is to be done about disposing of so much of the land as is not required for defence purposes.

H. THOMPSON, 10/2/86.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the Hon. the MINISTER of DEFENCE.

HON. MINISTER OF DEFENCE.—You will probably settle this matter. In meantime perhaps the land might let.

E. RICHARDSON, 1/3/86.

No. 24.

The Hon. the MINISTER of DEFENCE to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

THE Hon. the Minister of Defence desires that the Land Purchase Officer (Mr. Brewer) at Auckland may be requested to report how he recommends the land to be disposed of, keeping sufficient for the battery, and some small grounds round the dwelling, which has been offered to the Admiral in exchange for the building, &c., called "Admiralty House," in Auckland. Major Boddam will append a plan of the ground required for the battery.

12th March, 1886.

G. S. WHITMORE.

Plan herewith, as requested.—E. BODDAM, Major.—15th March, 1886.

No. 25.

The LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland, to the UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

Public Works Office, Auckland, 11th March, 1886.

STARK to the Queen: I enclose herewith certificate of title, Vol. 26, folio 33, of Allotment 3 and part 4, Section 2, Takapuna, with above transfer indorsed thereon. I also enclose policies of insurance, one in the New Zealand Insurance Company for £1,600, and the other in the National Insurance Company for £200.

H. M. BREWER,

Land Purchase Officer.

C. Y. O'Connor, Esq., Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington.

No. 26.

The ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to the LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland.

Public Works Office, Wellington, 22nd March, 1886.

Re land purchased from Mr. Stark for Takapuna Battery: Out of the 28 acres and 16 perches of land purchased from Mr. Stark, it is proposed to retain 3 acres 1 rood 11 perches for defence purposes, and also the dwelling-house, with adjacent ground, containing about 2 acres 3 roods 29 perches. The rest of the property, containing 21 acres 3 roods 16 perches, the Government contemplate disposing of either by sale or lease, and the Minister will be obliged if you will kindly report very fully, at your earliest convenience, as to what, in your opinion, would be the most advantageous way of dealing with it. A plan showing the land that is to be retained is enclosed herewith; but, as it does not show the whole of the property, and as we have no large scale plan here that does show the whole of the property, perhaps Mr. Hales, on application, would kindly

furnish you with such a plan, and locate the sections to be retained (as per plan herewith) upon it. If you consider that it would be advisable to cut the property up into allotments, please have the various allotments, and any new roads that may be necessary in order to give access to them, shown upon the plan to be prepared and sent in with your report. In reporting you will of course state whether you consider it would be preferable to sell the land outright, or only to lease it; and, if you consider that the latter course would be the best to adopt, then please state how long you think the leases should be for, and also make a note of any special stipulations which you think they should contain.

H. J. H. BLOW,

Acting Under-Secretary for Public Works.

P.S.—Your report should be accompanied by a schedule showing the numbers, areas, and positions of the various allotments, and the price that you estimate each will realize, and generally should afford the fullest possible information on the subject.—H. J. H. B.

H. M. Brewer, Esq., Land Purchase Officer, Auckland.

No. 27.

Mr. P. H. MASON to the Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Arundale, Devonport, Auckland, 18th March, 1886.

Would you oblige me with the reason why the Government have given £17,000 for Mr. Stark's property for defence purposes at the North Shore, which stands in the rate-book last year as valued at £3,500; and it is well known that land has not increased in value during the last year, indeed that it is very difficult to effect a sale. As a ratepayer I feel that I shall have to find my proportion of the sum thus expended, and there are many here who would like to have the matter explained, as, in its present state, it seems an unreasonable sum, even if the gentleman had been unwilling to sell, which is well known not to be the case.

Yours, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

PHILIP H. MASON.

No. 28.

The ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to Mr. P. H. MASON.

Public Works Office, Wellington, 26th March, 1886.

SIR,—

Re *Land purchased from Mr. Stark for Battery-site at Takapuna.*

I am directed by the Minister for Public Works to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 18th instant, addressed to the Hon. the Premier, in which you ask to be informed as to the reasons which induced the Government to pay the sum of £17,000 for Mr. Stark's property at the North Shore, Auckland, which has been taken for defence purposes.

In reply, I am to state that the Government, after making full inquiries as to the value of the portion of Mr. Stark's land which was absolutely required to be taken for the battery, and also as to the value of the whole of the property, and after taking into consideration all the circumstances surrounding the case, deemed it best, in the interests of the colony at large, to purchase the whole of Mr. Stark's land. I am further directed to state, in reference to the price paid by the Government for the property, that the Minister is not prepared to enter into any discussion on the subject.

I have, &c.,

H. J. H. BLOW,

Mr. P. H. Mason, Auckland.

Acting Under-Secretary for Public Works.

No. 29.

The LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland, to the UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.

Public Works Office, Auckland, 22nd March, 1886.

In answer to your telegram of 23rd February. In accordance with your instructions, I went to Takapuna and saw Mr. Stark *re* the venetian blinds. He declined to make any charge for them, saying he intended them to go with the house.

H. M. BREWER,

Land Purchase Officer.

C. Y. O'Connor, Esq., Under-Secretary for Public Works.

No. 30.

The ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to the LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 30th March, 1886.

Re my memorandum of 22nd, asking you for report as to best way of disposing of balance of Mr. Stark's property, Ministers are very anxious to get your report at earliest possible moment. Hon. Mr. Richardson therefore directs me to request that you will lay everything else aside until this is done. I am further to ask you to wire, on receipt of this, the date when you expect to be able to report; and also to ask you to wire me again when report has actually been posted.

H. M. Brewer, Esq., Land Purchase Officer, Auckland.

H. J. H. BLOW.

No. 31.

The LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland, to the ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.
(Telegram.) Auckland, 31st March, 1886.

I THINK I can promise report on Stark's property by Wednesday next—that is, leaving here on that date. A good deal of information has to be obtained, and I should not like to promise it earlier. If I can forward it earlier I will do so.

The Acting Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington. H. M. BREWER,
Land Purchase Officer.

No. 32.

The ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to the LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland.
(Telegram.) Wellington, 7th April, 1886.

Re disposal of balance of Mr. Stark's property: Hon. Mr. Richardson has just asked me whether I have received any telegraphic advice of your having posted your report on this matter. Kindly wire me at once if you have yet posted report, and, if not, when you will be able to post it.

H. M. Brewer, Esq., Land Purchase Officer, Auckland. H. J. H. BLOW.

No. 33.

The LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland, to the ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.
(Telegram.) Auckland, 8th April, 1886.

Re Mr. Stark's property: To enable me to carry out Minister's instructions, I am having a large plan prepared: this necessitates numerous measurements on the ground. I have hurried the surveyor as much as possible, but he reports that he will not be able to let me have plan under four days from now. My report will be made and forwarded immediately I get this plan. On receipt of your first telegram, I used every effort to get the report sent down this week, and the delay is unavoidable.

The Acting Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington. H. M. BREWER,
Land Purchase Officer.

No. 34.

The ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS to the LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland.
(Telegram.) Wellington, 8th April, 1886.

Re disposal of balance of Mr. Stark's property: Have shown your telegram of to-day to Minister, who directs me to say that he is much disappointed at delay in sending report, and that you must on no account fail to send it by steamer leaving Manukau next Tuesday.

H. M. Brewer, Esq., Land Purchase Officer, Auckland. H. J. H. BLOW.

No. 35.

The LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland, to the ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.
(Telegram.) Auckland, 9th April, 1886.

Re Mr. Stark's property: I much regret the Minister should be disappointed. I have pushed on the matter with all possible despatch. Have shown your telegram to surveyor, and told him his information must be ready by Monday. Will forward report and plan by Tuesday's steamer.

The Acting Under-Secretary for Public Works, Wellington. H. M. BREWER,
Land Purchase Officer.

No. 36.

The LAND PURCHASE OFFICER, Auckland, to the ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY for PUBLIC WORKS.
Public Works Office, Auckland, 12th April, 1886.

SIR,— *Re Land purchased from Mr. Stark for Takapuna Battery.*

In reply to above, asking me to send particulars and suggestions respecting balance of Mr. Stark's property, I have the honour to report as follows:—

(1.) Mr. Stark's property possesses a peculiar value for the following reasons: The Borough of Devonport only consists of six hundred acres, two hundred of which are Government reserves; nearly all the land in the borough, except Mr. Stark's, is subdivided, and it will be impossible in the future to get a large block of land like this except by paying a very large price for it. It possesses a magnificent sea-frontage on the whole of one side, and is bounded on the other by the main road; the consequence being that, although only twenty minutes from town, it is entirely secluded, and is as private and retired as if fifty miles out in the country. A person possessing means and with an eye to the beautiful world, in the future, when residence-sites of this description will be almost impossible to get, give almost any amount for this property. The tramway now under construction will pass the gates, which will increase the value of the estate. The land has been thoroughly tile-drained, is well fenced—in many cases with double fences, to protect trees—and has

live-fences planted. I should say that certainly not less than £500 to £600 has been expended upon the property, exclusive of the buildings. These are of the best description and fitted with all the latest improvements: the stables, saddle-rooms, buggy-house, &c., are all concreted and match-lined, as well as the men's quarters. The house, stable, lodge, &c., are undeniably worth about £3,000; the property-tax valuer put them down at £3,500.

The following particulars of the value of land, of properties sold and for sale, will support my valuation: (2.) Professor Thomas gave £1,600 for one acre and three-quarters and house three years ago. This property is only divided from Mr. Stark's by a piece of land about three acres in extent. House cost £450, leaving £1,250, or a little over £700 per acre, as the price of the land. (3.) Hammond's paddock, next to Mr. Stark's and adjoining Professor Thomas's, is under offer to a Mr. Tanner for £1,500 the lot, or £500 an acre: it is entirely unimproved, and has no buildings on it. (4.) Mr. Le Bailley bought a piece of land consisting of four and a half acres from a Mr. McLeod, for which he gave £2,700; the house had been burnt down, and Mr. Le Bailley bought the bare land itself for that sum. The property is situated just below Professor Thomas's, and very near Mr. Stark's property. Equal to £600 per acre. (5.) A piece of land adjoining Mr. Le Bailley's, which has been cut up into allotments, has been subdivided, and is selling at £6 per foot frontage, or £1,800 per acre. (6.) Vauxhall, opposite Professor Thomas's and adjoining Mr. Stark's property, is selling at £1 15s. to £2 5s. per foot on west side of the road, and £3 per foot, or £900 per acre, on east side, next to Professor Thomas's. (7.) Next to Mr. Le Bailley's is a block of land belonging to Mr. Justice Gillies and another. It has been subdivided, and the owners are asking £10 per foot for it. I believe some of it has been sold at that price, but am not quite certain. (8.) A piece of land next to Mr. Le Bailley's, but nearer Mr. Stark's, has been subdivided, and is selling at £2 per foot, or £600 an acre. (9.) The land opposite Mr. Stark's lodge gates, belonging to a Mr. Hall, has been selling at £1 10s. to £1 15s. per foot. This land is unimproved, is very indifferent, and has no sea-frontage. (10.) Unimproved land at Lake Takapuna, four miles away from Mr. Stark's property, is selling at £175 to £200 per acre. I myself was asked £175 per acre for some the other day.

I think the above will be sufficient to show that I am moderate in my estimate of the value of Mr. Stark's property, which is as follows: House, lodge, buildings, and improvements (a low estimate), £3,500; land taken for battery purposes and house, 6 acres 1 rood, at £600 per acre, £3,750; to 5,029ft. of frontage left for sale as per plan, at an average of £2 per foot, £10,058: total, £17,308. Mr. Stark's original plan showed 8,500ft. of frontage; but, from the position of the land retained by Government, the balance cannot be cut up so advantageously, and the result is less.

Mode of Disposal.—I would suggest that the land be sold by public auction upon following terms: One-fourth cash, and the balance in from three to four years. These terms would give people of moderate means a chance of obtaining a seaside section, and I believe many would go in for one.

Time of Sale.—The present is a time of great depression, and auctioneers and land agents are complaining that there is no demand for properties. Every one wishes to sell instead of to buy. When the tramway which is in course of construction is completed to the lake it will, I think, increase the chance of selling these sections. I would recommend, therefore, that the sections be not put into the market for twelve months.

In conclusion, I would refer to an absurd report that Mr. Stark offered his house and ten acres of land three years ago for £3,500. He is not here to deny it; but does it stand to reason that, at a time when, as I have shown in my report, land was selling all round him at an average of £600 per acre, he was going to give ten acres of land away? It would mean this, as no one can get away from the fact that the house and improvements cost over £3,000.

From my experience of Compensation Courts I should say that, if Mr. Stark had produced the evidence of the price of land which is in this report, he would have got as much as or more than has been awarded him, and the very people who say he has got too much would have given evidence against the Government and in his favour.

I have, &c.,

H. M. BREWER,
Land Purchase Officer.

The Acting Under-Secretary for Public Works,
Wellington.

No. 37.

The Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS to the Hon. the MINISTER of DEFENCE.

REFERRED to the Hon. the Minister of Defence.—Herewith please find report on plan for disposal of such portions of land adjoining the Takapuna Battery-site as may not be required, also plan of proposed subdivision. You will notice that it is proposed to sell all the land lying to the south-east of the battery. If you approve will you be good enough to allow other Ministers to see report and plan?

E. RICHARDSON.

16th April, 1886.