

1898.
NEW ZEALAND.

WASTE LANDS COMMITTEE.

REPORT ON THE QUESTION OF THE PURCHASE OF THE OTAHU ESTATE.

Brought up on the 23rd September, 1898, and ordered to be printed, together with Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence taken thereon.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

FRIDAY, THE 22ND DAY OF JULY, 1898.

Ordered, "That the question of the purchase of the Otahu Estate under the Land for Settlements Act be referred to the Waste Lands Committee to investigate the circumstances under which the purchase was made, the suitability of the land for settlement, and the disposal of the estate since its purchase; the Committee to have power to call for persons and papers; and that it be a direction of the House to the Committee that all evidence is to be taken in full in shorthand and laid upon the table of the House with the Committee's report."—(Hon. Mr. J. MCKENZIE.)

REPORT.

THE Waste Lands Committee, to whom above-mentioned subject was referred for investigation and report, have the honour to report that, having heard the statements of Mr. J. McKerrow, Chairman of the Land Purchase Board, also the Hon. J. G. Ward, Mr. Batger, and Mr. J. W. Kelly, M.H.R. (who withdrew all charges of impropriety against the department), they are satisfied there is no ground whatever for any charges in connection with the purchase of the Otahu Estate having been made against the Hon. Mr. Ward or the Land Purchase Department.

A copy of the evidence and proceedings of the inquiry is attached.

23rd September, 1898.

R. THOMPSON, Chairman.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS.

WEDNESDAY, 3RD AUGUST, 1898.

THE Committee met.

Present: Mr. R. Thompson (Chairman), Mr. Flatman, Mr. Hogg, Mr. Lang, Hon. Mr. J. McKenzie, Hon. Mr. Rolleston, Mr. J. W. Thomson, Mr. Wason, Mr. Duncan.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed.

The Committee took up the consideration of the question of the purchase of the Otahu Estate.

Mr. Kelly, M.H.R., attended, and stated that he had a number of witnesses (four) whom he wished to examine, and asked that the Chairman issue his summons to them to attend, and give an order for the payment of their expenses.

The Hon. Mr. Ward attended, and made a similar application.

Mr. J. McKerrow, Chairman of the Land Purchase Board under the Land for Settlements Act, also attended, and gave a list of the witnesses he intended examining with reference to the purchase of the estate in question.

The Committee resolved that they would first hear the evidence of Mr. McKerrow, and then come to a decision as to what witnesses should be examined.

Mr. Kelly then addressed the Committee.

The Hon. Mr. J. McKenzie addressed the Committee.

The Hon. Mr. Ward also addressed the Committee.

Mr. McKerrow then gave his evidence, which was taken down.