

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.
 The order of reference, dated 8th October, was read.
 The replies made by Dr. Giles to questions proposed by Mr. Stout were read. (Appendix B.)
 The Chairman read a telegram he had received from Mr. B. C. Haggitt. (Appendix C.)
 After deliberation, the Committee adjourned until Wednesday, 17th October, at 11 o'clock a.m.

WEDNESDAY, 17TH OCTOBER, 1877.

There being no quorum present, the meeting lapsed.

THURSDAY, 18TH OCTOBER, 1877.

The Committee met pursuant to notice at 11.30 o'clock a.m.

PRESENT:

Mr. Rees in the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Bowen,
 Mr. Button,
 Hon. Mr. Fox,

Hon. Mr. Gisborne,
 Mr. Harper,
 Mr. Stout.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The Chairman stated to the Committee that a *précis* of the papers relating to the Hon. Mr. Whitaker's connection with the matter of the Piako Swamp purchase had been prepared. (Appendix D.)

Resolved, on motion of Mr. Harper, That the Hon. Mr. Whitaker's connection with the purchase of the Piako Swamp does not, in the opinion of the Committee, bring him under the operation of the Disqualification Acts.

Resolved, on motion of Mr. Harper, That the above resolution be reported to the House.

The Chairman desired to express his opinion that the Hon. Mr. Whitaker was disqualified under the Act of 1870, and that whether the Piako Swamp contract or agreement was illegal or legal made no difference.

Read and confirmed, Monday, 22nd October.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

5TH OCTOBER, 1877.

LETTER from Mr. Rees to the Hon. Mr. Whitaker, read as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,—

"2nd October, 1877.

"*Re* Disqualification Committee. The principal point on which I asked for an inquiry in relation to your seat is the Piako Swamp purchase. I also desire to ascertain whether the exchange of Waitoa lands is such a contract as would come under the Act.

"I dare say that you are aware of the existence of public rumours connecting your name with some contract for sleepers with Mr. John Lundon.

"This last I mention simply to give an opportunity of explanation.

"I am, yours faithfully,

"Hon. F. Whitaker, Attorney-General."

"W. L. REES.

MR. REES'S STATEMENT.

Piako Swamp Purchase.

THE first charge is in relation to Mr. Whitaker's connection with the purchase of the Piako Swamp.

That purchase was made, I believe, in 1875. It may have been in 1874, I will not be sure about the date. A memorandum of agreement was entered into between Mr. Whitaker as purchaser on the one hand, and Dr. Pollen as representing the Government on the other. The terms were never finally agreed to by the parties till about the time of the House meeting last year. The memorandum was to this effect: Mr. Whitaker was to be allowed to purchase a large block of land, known as the Piako Swamp, of 70,000 or 80,000 acres, at a certain sum per acre, a portion of which was to be returned to Mr. Whitaker and the other purchasers for making roads. They were to make a road through the swamp, in consideration of which they were to receive back a portion of the purchase-money for every mile of road constructed, or so much per yard for the making of this road. If the contract went on through 1874, it extended to 1875 and 1876. It was incomplete, and absolutely not finally settled until after the House met last year. I myself have seen a memorandum, in the handwriting of Mr. Whitaker, upon the subject of Mr. Whitaker agreeing on behalf of purchasers to take a smaller area than was agreed on before. I believe money was paid upon the purchase in the month of June last year, about the time the House was sitting. The negotiations were not completed at that time, or at the time Mr. Whitaker entered into the arrangements before he was elected.

If that be so, then Mr. Whitaker was never elected a member of the House at all. This is my own impression of the matter. Possibly I may be mistaken. If this can be maintained, then Mr. Whitaker was a contractor for the purchase of the public lands not in accordance with the laws of the colony.