

Government to deduct from any moneys they had to pay to Messrs. Brogden the sums due on their promissory notes. After they had sent that letter, Messrs. Brogden did not send out any more emigrants. But Messrs. Brogden gave the promissory notes under protest, and with the view of inducing the Government to recommend that they should not be enforced. As I have already said, the petitioners do not wish to impute anything like wilful misrepresentation to any member of the Government; but, at the same time, they allege that there was misrepresentation, and that they suffered loss in consequence. I will repeat that, they were acting throughout on the supposition that they should neither make any profit nor sustain any loss out of this emigration matter. It will be remembered that Messrs. Brogden not only paid the passage-money of the immigrants, but also advanced money for the purchase of their kits. However, they do not claim anything from the Government on that account—they simply ask the Committee to take the fact into consideration. There is a further point on which the petitioners do not think the Government have acted fairly, and that is, that they have declined to furnish them (the petitioners) with the copy of a document which would, or might, have the effect of inducing the Committee to report in favour of the petitioners. It appears that the Agent-General did consider the matters submitted to him by the Government; and it appears, also, that he forwarded to the Government some recommendation; but that recommendation was not brought before the last Committee, nor has it been open to us. The recommendation I refer to is contained in a letter written by the Agent-General to the Government on 10th July, 1873. We now ask the Committee to procure a copy of that letter. On 8th April last, an application was made to the Government for a copy of that letter. The application was as follows:—

SIR,—

Wellington, 8th April, 1881.

We have the honor to request to be furnished with a copy of a letter from the late Agent-General (Dr. Featherston) to the Government, dated 10th July, 1873. That letter related to our immigration agreement with the Government, and was read over to us in London. We wish to refer to it, and now ask for a copy to insure accuracy.

We have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister for Immigration, Wellington.

JOHN BROGDEN AND SONS.

To this letter the Government sent the following reply:—

GENTLEMEN,—

Immigration Office, Wellington, 20th April, 1881.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 8th instant, applying for a copy of a letter which was written to the Government by the late Dr. Featherston, as Agent-General for the colony in London, on the 10th July, 1873. And in reply to inform you that, as litigation is pending between your firm and the Government, the Cabinet does not feel justified in supplying you with a copy of the letter in question.

I have, &c.,

W ROLLESTON,

Minister for Immigration.

Messrs. J Brogden and Sons, Wellington.

I wish now shortly to call the attention of the Committee to the circumstances under which immigration was carried on in those days. It is clear that Government thought it advisable to leave all arrangements financial and otherwise in connection with immigration to the Agent-General, the principal object of the Government being to get out as many persons as possible. In proof of this I could quote several statements of Ministers and others.

I will give you one. On the 1st April, 1873, the Hon. Mr. Richardson (who was always very careful in expressing an opinion on any of these subjects) says, in a memorandum:—

In the despatches to be sent home to the Agent-General by the outgoing mail, I think it is absolutely necessary that the Agent-General's attention should be specially directed to the present state of the labour-market in New Zealand, and that he be informed that, with the full expectation that the number of emigrants which he has been instructed to send out will be forwarded during the coming season, the Government have entered into contracts which will provide employment for these immigrants, and that he be instructed, by return mail, to inform the Government whether he will be able to send out anything approaching the number asked for, as, if not, it will be necessary, by the time the Agent-General's replies arrive, to take steps, by retarding the works or otherwise, to prevent the serious disturbance of the labour-market, which will inevitably occur in the colony during next summer, when the shearing and farming season comes round. The only thing which has kept the rates of labour from rising to rates ruinous to the various interests in the colony, during the season just ended, has been the shipment of so much labour by Messrs Brogden; and, as it appears that they have ceased sending men out (at least for the present), it is all the more necessary for the due carrying out of the public works that the emigrants ordered should be sent out, and imperatively necessary that the Government be reliably informed at the earliest possible date of the capability or otherwise of the Agent-General to comply with their instructions.

The fact is, that at that time, the Public Works scheme being full swing, it was considered desirable that as many immigrants as possible should be introduced into the colony. But, in comparison with the immigrants sent out by the Agent-General, those who were sent out by the Messrs. Brogden were placed under a great disadvantage, because they were compelled to pay £5 or £6 more for their passage-money, and when they arrived here they stood no better chance of obtaining employment, for the simple reason that there was abundance of employment for everybody. Amongst other things, in this connection, which caused loss to the petitioners, was the carriage of the immigrants from one port to another, or, in other words, from the place where they were landed to the places where they were wanted. I shall not detain the Committee any longer, but merely repeat that the petitioners consider that they have a fair claim upon the colony for the loss they have sustained, and at the next meeting I will bring forward evidence in support of that claim.

8TH JULY, 1881.

Messrs. W T. L. Travers and C. W. Cave appeared on behalf of the petitioners, and Mr. H. D. Bell for the Government.

MR. ALEXANDER BROGDEN, examined.

1. *Mr. Travers.*] You are a partner in the firm of John Brogden and Sons?—Yes.
2. And, on behalf of your firm, you have prepared and presented the petition which is now before this Committee to the House of Representatives?—Yes.
3. You have acted in this matter with the sanction of your partners?—Yes.
4. The first three clauses in the petition relate to provisional contracts entered into with Sir Julius Vogel in connection with railway works?—Yes.
5. When?—In the year 1871 we were authorized to construct works to the value of £4,000,000.