

on the subject of their treatment in the matter of the introduction of immigrants by them. In accordance with Dr. Featherston's request I attended at his office and saw the three Messrs. Brogden there. A long conversation took place on the subject, and they gave a number of reasons why they considered that they had been badly treated; but of course, after this lapse of time, I cannot recollect the details of the conversation. It must be remembered that the interview took place nine years ago. The letter of the 10th July says, "I have the honor to inform you that I had yesterday a conference with the Messrs. Brogden, at which the Hon. Mr. Hall was present. Mr. Hall, in the discussion, detailed fully the negotiations which had taken place in the colony between the Government and Mr. James Brogden." My impression is that this referred to an application to the Government by Messrs. Brogden for a reconsideration of their case, and it was because I had a personal knowledge of the subject that Dr. Featherston asked me to attend on that occasion.

645B. Have you read the Agent-General's letter of the 10th July since then?—I remember that the Messrs. Brogden did frequently, at the Agent-General's office, urge reasons why they considered that they had a claim on the Government. As is stated in this letter, these promissory notes given to the Government were for a less amount than that which Messrs. Brogden received from the immigrants. I have no further recollection of the matter than that they urged these points as grounds for relief. Dr. Featherston did not make any promise at the time; he was very guarded in his expression of opinion.

645c. *Mr. Bell.*] Can you remember whether Dr. Featherston admitted that he had made any representation to the Messrs. Brogden, such as they have asserted that he did make?—No, these things occurred over eight years ago, and I cannot remember details.

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THURSDAY, 4TH AUGUST, 1881.

MR. BELL'S STATEMENT.

*Mr. Bell:* I do not desire to make a speech, but will simply confine myself to calling the attention of the Committee to the new evidence which Messrs. Brogden have adduced in support of their petition, and will briefly point out how it bears upon the case. This is now the third time that the grievances of Messrs. Brogden have appeared in a printed statement, whereas the case for the Government has never been presented in a collected form; were it not for this, I would not take up the time of the Committee with an address dealing with the facts from the Government point of view. There has been previously no opportunity of even stating briefly the reasons which have induced successive Governments of the colony to refuse to give consideration to these claims. The Committee will remember that this petition is founded upon certain grievances, which may be very shortly stated in this way: First, that the Brogdens entered into the immigration contract at the urgent request of the Government, and not at their own wish. Secondly, that the contract of 1872 was made, and the prior shipments of immigrants were made, upon the faith of certain representations by the Agent-General to the Messrs. Brogden, upon which representations they necessarily relied, but which representations, however, proved to be incorrect. Thirdly, that immediately after the execution of the agreement the Government began taking out immigrants in the same ships on more favourable terms, and that this created disaffection, which resulted in repudiation by Messrs. Brogden's immigrants of their promissory notes. Fourthly, they allege that every possible chance of recovery was extinguished by the abolition of imprisonment for debt. I propose to call the attention of the Committee to the new evidence bearing upon these several allegations, feeling sure that the members of the Committee have in their minds—without any need of recapitulation of facts by me—the printed evidence taken before the Committee of 1873, and the printed documents which have been presented by the Messrs. Brogden. Now, what I would say, first of all, is that the evidence, as a whole, shows clearly that Messrs. Brogden did enter into the immigration scheme for their own benefit, and that they always intended to import immigrants—their expressed intention being to control the labour market. Mr. A. Brogden himself frankly admits that they would have sent out 500 or 600 workmen in any case. This is borne out by his letter of the 8th February, 1872, to Mr. James Brogden, in which he states, "We shall also be sending out 500 to 600 workmen." Then, in corroboration of this, I may refer to Mr. Henderson's letter of the 24th January, 1872, in which he says, "Should you engage men, which we feel sure you may safely do, let it be for labour, 5s. 6d. for nine hours." Mr. Henderson, in the same letter, also writes, "The men here employed upon the works have struck against the nine hours' system, but should they for the present submit to the nine hours the moment we commence work upon a great scale we may expect another strike, and hence the necessity of arranging with Dr. Featherston for a supply of good mechanics and labourers sent out by you so as to be under your control, although the passage is paid by the Agent-General." It will be observed that he says, "so as to be under your control." And he adds, "300 men could be sent here"—that is, to Auckland—thus clearly showing that the Messrs. Brogden all along intended to import immigrants to control the labour market and to enforce the nine hours system. In further support of what I submit, I will quote from the letter of Mr. Noble, manager of Messrs. Brogden's firm in London. Writing on the 14th March, 1872, Mr. Noble says, "We are now merely collecting up the men who were under promise to go, and waiting further news from you before making fresh engagements." That shows that Messrs. Brogden desired a particular class of men, and we have Dr. Featherston's positive statement, in the despatch of the 10th July, 1873, that the class of men the firm desired—single men and navvies—was not such as the Government were anxious to import, and therefore it was absolutely necessary that Messrs. Brogden should import them for their large railway contracts. The Committee will remember that Messrs. Brogden's terms were that all men should remain in the employ of the firm for two years, and Messrs. Brogden, if they could have managed to enforce that condition, would have had the control of the labour market, for they had the works for nearly a million—which was a very large part of the contracts being carried out under the public works system at that time—and they tendered for nearly all the other railway works, and no doubt expected to get them. Now, what I wish to impress upon the Committee as the view taken by successive Governments of this claim is this: that from the very first, and throughout, Government refused to take the risk of absconders. They offered to find the pas-