

They are right, excepting that there are two letters omitted. The first letter could scarcely have been expected to have been put in, because it is from the then Superintendent of the Province of Wellington, and the Government may have supposed they had no opportunity of obtaining that. Although, by-the-by, that ought not to be, because all the documents of the province were handed over to the Government of the colony. [Letter from Dr. Featherston to Sir William Fitzherbert, dated 24th November, 1869, handed in, and read by Chairman.] I may state, in reference to that, that this letter is the testimony of the officer under whom I immediately served for these years, that the duties of the office in connection with which I applied for a pension were, in his opinion, faithfully performed. The last letter is dated 31st January, from the Colonial Secretary's Office. [Letter read by Chairman.]

57 *Mr. Montgomery.*] That letter is not here?—No. Neither of them. I think they are of great importance, as showing that the resignation was sent in in proper order, and the services acknowledged as having been properly performed; and showing that after an investigation the Governor issued a warrant for a definite sum for a pension. I have had that pension for ten years, and I think it hard that it is now called in question. It is not a matter of indifference to me, but I do not know that I need be ashamed of that; it is rather a credit. But I may state this—it is, perhaps pertinent to the subject: the present Premier was a member of the Government when I, feeling that I could not perform the higher duties that I was then charged with, without prematurely leaving England, was ready to sacrifice my personal interests, and did absolutely send in my resignation, though thereby I hazarded the pension which I had worked for for many years. The present Premier was a prominent member of the Government which refused to accept it—and that will be seen in the printed papers—with a view to my ulterior prospect of a retiring allowance. Mr. Gisborne at that time had no office, he was simply an Under-Secretary and was merely the mouth-piece of the Government of the day, of which Mr. Fox and Mr. Vogel were members; and it was well known I could bring no influence to bear upon those gentlemen. On the contrary, they were my political opponents. I put the application in—everybody knew that—the thing was done before the people, in the presence of the people, with the cognizance of the people. The Governor put his name to the warrant for a definite sum, and I think it hard that it should now be called in question. At any rate, I did not give it to myself; my friends did not give it me. The then Attorney-General did not take the same view that I did, as to the exact day when I attained the age of sixty years; but that is a mere bagatelle. It would only have been for me, if I wished, to continue that office; I was not turned out of it. I had been turned out of the Government by Messrs Fox and Vogel, and there was no reason, therefore, that I should not have continued the office of Commissioner of Crown Lands. Mr. Holdsworth was the deputy. He had been acting when the Government of the day, after investigation, declared me entitled to a pension. I did not wish to stand in the way of Mr. Holdsworth, but I have no doubt if I had expressed a wish to continue the few months to the end of July 1871, I could have done so. The Governor issued the warrant as from the 31st July, 1870. I do not know that I have anything else to say to the Committee.

58 *The Chairman.*] I understand you to say that these papers comprise the whole of the case, so far as you are aware, when the two letters you have put in are included?—Yes.

59. The computation of your pension included, did it not, the time you were responsible Minister? Yes.

60. I think you were a Minister when you went to England for the purpose of conversion and consolidation?—Yes, I having leave of absence granted.

61. Do you happen to remember whether this matter was ever submitted to the Audit Office?—I am not aware. I may say distinctly, it is the first time I ever heard of any objection, officially or unofficially; I might have left the colony and, being persuaded that such a thing could not be altered, have sold my interest in the pension any day.

62. I ask you that question because I see nothing in the papers relating to your case, or any sign of the intervention of the Audit; whilst in all the other cases it does appear so?—No; I have had no intimation from any of the officers of the Government, either officially or semi-officially, or otherwise. It is the first time it has been subject to comment.

63. Then would it be right to assume that your pension was made the subject merely of legal approval—that it was passed on the ground of legal opinion?—All that I know is that I did not grant myself the pension. I sent in my application, and that was considered, with such results as are before this Committee. The only intimation I have had is in the papers placed before the Committee; and neither before nor subsequently have I ever received any communication.

64. During what portion of the computed period did you cease to perform the duties of Commissioner of Crown Lands?—When I went to England. In reality I was performing the duties at a prior period, when I held office in the Government of the colony. During that time the responsibilities of the double work rested with me. I was constantly appealed to, and had the work to do, though I received no payment for that time. When I went to England I had special leave of absence, and a deputy was appointed to act for me.

65. *Mr. McLean.*] You are aware, Sir William, that this is not the only case picked out. It has all come out of the question whether you could hold the position of Minister, and the other position, and be entitled to a pension; and it is the case with all the other pensions. Did you fill up any return of your dates of service, the same as is filled up by any other servant?—I suppose I did; I do not know. I have nothing but what I sent in. I had no communication with the Government, verbal or written, except what appears in the papers before the Committee. The position was a kind of double thing. The Committee will quite understand that the Commissioner of Crown Lands now holds office under very different circumstances. It was a very mixed affair then. He had a kind of an allegiance to the Government of the colony, and also to the Superintendent; and it is very possible that the Superintendent, to whom reference was made—as I believe appears in the printed papers—did make a statement as to the services performed and amount due. That was not my statement, but his statement.

66. You are aware that every one applying for a pension has to fill up a schedule of services, and it was that schedule I was referring to?—If I filled it up myself it must be in the possession of the General Government; I have no recollection myself. No letter was sent to me calling attention to any omission on my part. In respect of this, I think I can refer to a fact that will make some im-