

1882.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE :

(REPORT ON PETITION OF J. A. WILSON, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND APPENDIX.)

Report brought up 21st August, 1882, and ordered to be printed.

THE petitioner states that he was Judge of the Native Land Court and Royal Commissioner under "The Tauranga District Land Act, 1867;" that he has been deprived of his appointment as a Judge of the Native Land Court, although it was understood this appointment was to be a permanent one, and in consideration of which he withdrew a money claim on account of commission on Native lands purchased on account of the Government; that he had to remove to Tauranga, which cost him over £500; that he has been put to heavy expenses upon the faith of an understanding which had been broken by the authorities; and that his summary dismissal as a Judge has seriously injured him. He prays the House will cause full inquiry into his case and such relief to be afforded him as may seem meet.

I am directed to report: The Committee are of opinion that the petitioner is not entitled to the compensation claimed for the purchase of Native lands, as such claim was abandoned on his appointment of Judge of the Native Land Court. With respect to the claim for consideration for loss of office, the Committee are of opinion that, owing to a want of harmony between the Chief Judge and the petitioner, it is not expedient in the public interest that he be reappointed a Judge of the Native Land Court; but the Committee recommend that some other appointment in the public service, for which he is suitable, be offered him.

21st August, 1882.

T. KELLY,
Chairman.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THURSDAY, 6TH JULY, 1882.

Mr. JOHN SHEEHAN, M.H.R., examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] The petitioner states that he was appointed a Judge of the Native Land Court by you in 1878. Is that the fact?—Yes.

2. And he says that there was a verbal agreement made between you, as Minister of Justice, and himself, to the effect that, in consideration of his receiving this appointment, he would forego certain claims which he had against the Government to the amount of £1,050 6s. 10d.?—Yes, I told Mr. Wilson that, if he accepted this appointment which I offered him, he would have to drop all his claims against the Government.

3. Do you think, then, that in taking the Judgeship on those terms he gave up his claims against the Government finally?—Yes; I considered, in my own mind, that his claims were wiped out in consideration of his receiving this appointment.

4. Was there any agreement to the effect that, if the petitioner lost his situation as a Judge, he could revive his claims?—Not so far as I can recollect.

5. Was his appointment different from that of any other Civil servant?—Yes; I think Judges are specially dealt with in reference to their appointments.

6. I wish to ascertain whether, in the written appointment of Mr. Wilson, there was any special condition made?—No, but the tendency has been to regard these Native Land Court Judges as if they were Supreme Court Judges, so far as their tenure of office is concerned.

7. You consider that a Judge of the Native Land Court can only be removed for misconduct or in consequence of there being a necessity for reducing the number of Judges?—Yes, but in this case Mr. Wilson was removed and a number of other Judges were appointed directly afterwards, and I consider that was a breach of the conditions on which he accepted office as a Judge.

1—I. 1c.