

SIR,—

Wellington, 22nd May, 1882.

In answer to your letter of the 20th instant with reference to what took place at the sale of the reclaimed land on behalf of the General Government by me in 1879, I may state that I retain a very clear recollection of the circumstances connected therewith. Before I offered any of the lots the question was discussed, and I was asked by several persons in the auction room whether the streets would be made by the Government. The Hon. Colonel Whitmore, Colonial Secretary, being then present, I at once referred the matter to him, and requested him to inform me what I should say in reply. After a minute or twos' consideration he told me I could state that the Government would undertake to form and make the streets. I stated this to the audience in the very words just written, and added that buyers might rest assured the work would be done thoroughly as the General Government, unlike the Provincial Governments, were not in the habit of doing things by halves; that intending buyers might accept my assurance as official, as the Colonial Secretary had just instructed me to make the statement I had. I am positive having made use of the above words in the presence of the Hon. Colonel Whitmore, and who, I understand, gave his assent thereto. Much satisfaction was expressed at the announcement, and I entertain no doubt that the statement and promise then made had a most important influence on the bidding. I am clearly of opinion that this matter does morally, if not legally, form a portion of the contract entered into by the vendors with the buyers at the sale. If ever required I am prepared to confirm what I now write to the Government, or in any other way purchasers at the sale may ask me to do.

I have, &c.,

J. D. Baird, Wellington.

R. J. DUNCAN.

SIR,—

Legislative Council, 27th July, 1882.

In reply to your letter of the 25th instant, covering an enclosure signed by Mr. R. J. Duncan, and asking me to state what is my recollection of what occurred at the sale of the reclaimed land sections with reference to the street formation, Mr. Duncan's account is in the main correct, but he has added one word to what I said—viz., "make" the streets. A question was asked me at the last moment, just as the first lots were being put up, whether the Government would form the streets. I am positive of the words used, because on my return to my office I put them down, and have very often since been referred to on the subject. The auctioneer having put the question urged me strongly to give the assurance, on the ground that it would add several pounds per foot to the price. I answered carefully, "Yes, the Government will form the streets." Several further questions were asked by persons standing round, apparently to induce me to promise more than I intended, but I gave no further reply beyond repeating that the streets would be formed. Mr. Duncan, however, said that "the Colonial Secretary has undertaken to form the streets, and we may be sure the Government will do so liberally." This was in reply especially to an inquiry whether any metal would be put down.

To my mind the promise I made has been very amply redeemed, inasmuch as I am sure nobody felt that the Government was bound to do more than form the streets and paths, and that the metal, and gravel, and footpath boards, and anything else done has been in excess of undertaking.

I have, &c.,

Hon. W. W. Johnston.

G. S. WHITMORE.