

transaction?—I had no knowledge about it. It did not, I think, strike me at first, as regards the Waimate, that he was getting commission; but when he came to be taking trouble with the Rotorua it probably did occur to me. Mr. Steward is not a philanthropist.

96. Did it strike you that there was any impropriety in a member of Parliament thus acting?—If you ask my own opinion on the subject, it is, that I do not see any harm in Mr. Steward getting commission, so long as it did not influence him in the action he took in Parliament. If it did, then he would be guilty of a great impropriety.

Sir Julius Vogel having retired from the Committee-room,

Mr. W. J. STEWARD, further examined.

97. *Mr. Barron.*] I understood you to say that while on your way to Wellington you met the liquidator of the Duntroon Railway?—No; I was referring to three years ago in regard to what took place in respect to the debentures of that company. I said that when I was on my way to Wellington at that time—some three years ago—I met the chairman of the Duntroon Company, who, learning that I was endeavouring to sell the Waimate 7-per-cent. debentures, suggested that I should take up theirs. I did not see the liquidator at all.

98. When was that?—About three years ago.

99. What date?—I could not say.

100. This is what I want to get at: Did you communicate with the present liquidator?—Yes, when negotiating for the sale of the Waimate debentures. The letters are here. I did not put them in, because the negotiation came to nothing. I brought the letters with me, if the Committee should wish to refer to them.

101. When was that—in 1885?—Yes.

102. In September, 1885, you communicated with the liquidator, asking him to place the debentures in your hands?—Yes.

103. Was this the 28th September—was that the first date on which you communicated with the liquidator?—I might have sent a previous letter on the 25th, 26th, or 27th.

104. Might you have communicated with him before the 20th of September?—No certainly not.

105. It was after that you communicated with him?—Yes—after the date that the request came to me from the Waimate Company. But it ended in nothing.

THURSDAY, 17TH JUNE, 1886.

Mr. J. C. BUCKLAND, M.H.R., examined.

106. *The Chairman.*] You are aware, Mr. Buckland, of the object of this inquiry. I may first read the order of reference to you. [Order of reference read.] It had been said that Mr. Steward had entered into some arrangement or agreement with the directors of the Waimate Railway Company by which, if the Waimate line should be included in the schedule of the Purchase of District Railways Bill, he was to receive some remuneration. It has been stated that you can give some evidence on this point. Will you favour the Committee by giving your evidence?—I am unable to give any evidence on the point further than this: that, having been a landholder in the district through which the railway goes, I received a communication from a gentleman who acts as agent to Mr. John Douglas, who was a gentleman most largely interested. I received the letter shortly after I went home. I threw it in the fire at the time. It asked me if I would be willing to contribute in proportion to the value of the interest I held in the district to pay Mr. Steward some £300 or £400. I am speaking from the impression I received from that letter. I thought at the time it was for some reward to Mr. Steward for getting that measure passed, and getting the Waimate line put into the schedule. That was my impression at the time. But that impression has not been borne out by subsequent inquiry. When I received the letter I thought it was a confidential communication, and I threw it into the fire. I should not have said any more on the subject, but in these places people do discuss political questions, and a friend of mine afterwards said that Steward had received some money for securing the passage of the Bill and getting the Waimate line included in the schedule. I let the subject pass; but when the matter came up publicly, by a Committee of Inquiry being moved for in the House, I asked this gentleman by telegram if he could tell me where he got his information from. He said he could not do so. He said he heard it as part of the ordinary gossip. I then wrote to Mr. Ritchie, asking him if it was for the passing of the District Railways Act. Mr. Ritchie said it was in connection with debentures, but that he knew very little about it; but that he had written to Mr. Douglas on the subject, and Mr. Douglas explained that it was not for passing the Act or getting the Bill into the schedule, but for work subsequently done by Mr. Steward. He forwarded to me a copy of Mr. Douglas's letter explaining the position. Since then I have seen Mr. Douglas, who explained to me—and his explanation was quite clear—that the sum to be paid to Mr. Steward was not for any work done in the House in passing the District Railways Purchasing Bill. He said it was in respect to other services which Mr. Steward had rendered. I may perhaps be allowed to read a letter which I have received—

DEAR MR. BUCKLAND,—

Waihao Downs, Waimate, 8th June, 1886.

I have a note from Mr. Ritchie, wherein he refers to your remarking that Steward was being subjected to a keelhauling because of the interest taken by him in, and supposed commission derived by him from, the sale of the Waimate and Duntroon District Railways. We never bargained for and he never received any commission from us; but, the terms fixed by Government making the debentures unsaleable in the Home market for some time, induced us to look about for an outlet here, and, hearing that the Government Insurance Office had assisted other railway companies in finance, we offered to pay Steward a commission which would gross him about £300 to £400 if he could get the Government Insurance Office to adopt our debentures. Steward made no secret of this, but, on the other