

you to an absurd report that Mr. Stark offered his house and ten acres of land three years ago for £3,500." The house and ten acres of land was offered to a friend of mine not eighteen months ago for £4,000, or the house and five acres for £3,500, clearly showing that Mr. Stark's valuation of the land was £500 for five acres, or £100 per acre. I see in the *Herald* of to-day that the Government valuation of the property for property-tax was £15,500. As I stated to the Government, it stands in the rate-book last year at £3,500, and it is curious that, while other property has depreciated in value, Mr. Stark's should have risen from £3,500 to £15,500. It also states in the *Herald* of to-day that Mr. Stark had been offered £16,000 for the property. This offer, I have been given to understand, was made to Messrs. Cochrane and Son; but it would be well to ascertain by whom it was made, for it must have been made within about twelve months of the time when Mr. Stark was asking for ten acres and the house £4,000, and during that time property has been very much depreciated in value. Apologizing for troubling you with the matter, my excuse for doing so is that, while the colony is borrowing large sums of money, it is but right that the representatives of the people should see that these sums are properly expended.—I have, &c., PHILIP H. MASON.—P.S.: As I see by this morning's paper that Mr. Mitchelson is looking after affairs in Waitemata during Mr. Hurst's illness, if you think will please show this letter to him.

Copy of telegram sent to John Ross, Esq., Auckland.—Parliament House, 25th June, 1886.—John Ross, Esq., Sargood and Co., Auckland.—The Public Accounts Committee, having been informed that you had arranged some time ago with Mr. Stark for the purchase of his house and ten acres land at Takapuna Point, since bought by Government, direct me to ask if you will be good enough to telegraph date and particulars of the arrangement, stating also what portion of the land and what buildings were included; also, if you have no objections, why the negotiations fell through. Reply paid.—F. J. Moss, Chairman.

25th June, 1886.—Copy of telegram sent to Messrs. Cochrane and Son, Auckland.—The Public Accounts Committee find, from the report of the District Valuator, that you had, as agents, made to Mr. Stark an offer of sixteen thousand pounds for his house and land at Takapuna Point, lately purchased by the Government. I am directed to ask if the information is correct, and, if so, if you will be good enough to say for whom the offer was made. Reply paid.—F. J. Moss, Chairman.

Copy of telegram sent to Mr. Thomas Seaman, Assessor, Auckland.—Parliament House, 25th June, 1886.—In your letter of 24th March to the Property-tax Commissioner you refer to information received from one of Auckland's leading public men, who had seen the written offer of £16,000 made to Mr. Stark for his property lately bought by the Government; also to another leading business gentleman, who knew of an offer of £450 per acre for six acres of the northern portion. The Public Accounts Committee, to whom the letter has been sent, request that you will be good enough to state the names of the gentlemen referred to in your letter. Reply paid.—F. J. Moss, Chairman.

Auckland, 25th June, 1886.—Property-tax Commissioner, Wellington.—Have just ascertained on reliable authority that the £16,000 was offered in writing by Samuel Cochrane and Son, and that it was shown to many. I did not see it, nor was I informed by whom the offer was made, but only assured that it was *bonâ fide*.—THOMAS SEAMAN.

Auckland, 26th June, 1886.—F. J. Moss, Esq., Wellington.—In a second telegram to the Property-tax Commissioner yesterday I gave the name of the firm who offered the £16,000 for Mr. Stark's property, having after my first reply ascertained that it was Samuel Cochrane and Son. I have seen Mr. Cochrane, and he says it was a *bonâ fide* offer so far as he knew, but he declines to give the name or names of their clients. I have heard outside that it was for a syndicate. Mr. Oliver Mays has told me that he saw the offer in Mr. W. S. Cochrane's handwriting, and he knows that it was shown to other gentlemen. The offer of £450 per acre was, I was told, made by a gentleman in Australia. My informant was Mr. Ewen Alison, one of the late Assessors for Waitemata.—THOMAS SEAMAN.

Memorandum for F. J. Moss, Esq., M.H.R.—Re purchase of Stark's land: Reply to Major Atkinson's question, comparative valuation of Stark's land, 1882 and 1885—Blocks 1, 3, and 4, 1882, £5,750; Blocks 1, 3, and 4, 1885, £21,400.—J. SPERRY, Commissioner.

Auckland, 28th June, 1886.—F. J. Moss, M.H.R., Wellington.—We did make Stark an offer of sixteen thousand—two thousand cash, balance 5 per cent. It is not usual to reveal principal.—SAMUEL COCHRANE AND SONS.

Auckland, 28th June, 1886.—F. J. Moss, Esq., M.H.R., Wellington.—Delayed replying ascertain exact date: May, 1884. Ten acres, the cultivated portion, best frontage—to main road and sea—with house, stables, and all outhouses. Arranged purchase for three thousand five hundred pounds; exceptionally easy terms. He inserted clause in deed restricting power of cutting up should I wish; and, friends and others who knew value of land there deeming price high, I objected, and negotiations fell through. He valued land £2,000; house, &c., £1,500. Hugh Campbell, Esq., solicitor, who perused deed, can confirm price.—JOHN ROSS.

Telegram from the Chairman, Public Accounts Committee, to H. M. Brewer, Public Works Department.—Wellington, 29th June, 1886.—In your letter of 20th January to the Hon. Minister for Public Works you recommend offer to Mr. Stark of £17,500 for his property. In a subsequent memorandum of 22nd January you disclaim having had anything to do with the settlement, and therefore have no report or valuation to forward. These papers have been sent to Public Accounts Committee, who request you to explain the discrepancy between the two letters. Reply paid.—F. J. Moss.

Telegram from the Chairman, Public Accounts Committee, to P. H. Mason, Esq., Armidale, Devonport, Auckland.—Wellington, 29th June, 1886.—Your letter to Mr. Peacock of 18th June has been laid before Public Accounts Committee. Will you be kind enough to let them know to whom the offers of Stark's property referred to in your letter were made—namely, ten acres and house for £4,000, and five acres and house for £3,500.—F. J. Moss.

Devonport, 30th June, 1886.—F. Moss, House of Representatives, Wellington.—Cottenham Kingsford, Devonport. Government should appoint inquiry here.—PHILIP H. MASON.

30th June, 1886.—Mr. Brewer, Land Purchase Department, Auckland.—Committee meet at twelve, but have not yet received your reply.—F. J. Moss, Chairman.

Wellington, 30th June, 1886.—H. M. Brewer, Esq., Land Purchasing Office, Auckland.—You are hereby required forthwith to attend a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Representatives at the Parliament Buildings, Wellington, to give evidence on the subject of the purchase of Stark's property, North Shore, Auckland, by the Government. Reply, stating when you will leave Auckland.—CHAIRMAN, Public Accounts Committee.

Wellington, 30th June, 1886.—Le Bailly, Esq., Devonport.—The Public Accounts Committee, having been informed that you were offered Stark's property at Takapuna Point some time ago, will be obliged for the particulars and date. Reply paid.—F. J. Moss, Chairman.

Wellington, 30th June, 1886.—Messrs. Ashton and Sons, Auckland.—The Public Accounts Committee, having heard that Stark's property at Takapuna Point, purchased by Government, was in your hands at one time for sale, will be obliged to you for date and particulars. Reply paid.—F. J. Moss, Chairman.

Wellington, 30th June, 1886.—E. Hammond, Esq., Devonport.—The Public Accounts Committee having been informed that you ask £860 for your property adjoining Stark's, lately sold to Government, will you oblige by stating if this is correct; also the acreage. Reply paid.—F. J. Moss, Chairman.