

Issues suggested for Consideration of the Committee.

1. Whether it was expedient, in the interests of the community, to purchase the property?
2. Whether the purchase was conducted in a legitimate manner?
3. Whether the price paid was fair and reasonable?
4. Whether the Government could, under the circumstances, have acquired the property within a reasonable time for a less price than was paid for it?
5. Whether the whole property should have been bought, or only the portions required for the purposes of the battery?
6. Whether the Government were justified in paying for the property the price they did?
7. Whether the property could have been obtained for a less amount through the Compensation Court?
8. Whether, in view of the conflict of evidence, it is not desirable that the inquiry should be further prosecuted on the spot, and the Auditor-General or some other competent officer sent to Auckland, with power to take evidence on oath for that purpose?

F. J. Moss,
Chairman, Public Accounts Committee.

26th July, 1886.

LETTER from Mr. HOLMES in reference to the above issues.

DEAR SIR,—

Wellington 30th July, 1886.

Having broken my leg, I am unable to attend the meeting of the Committee this morning. I understand that the report respecting the purchase of Stark's property will be considered by the Committee this day; and, as I have taken considerable pains to master the evidence given concerning this matter, I would feel obliged if the Committee would extend to me the privilege of expressing my views and giving my vote upon it.

It seems to me, from the sworn and detailed evidence of Messrs. Brewer, Alison, Seamen, and others, that—first, the whole of the property should have been bought, as that was the most economical way of securing a site for the battery; second, that the Government were justified in paying for the property the price they did; third, the property could not have been obtained by the Government for a less amount, either in the Compensation Court or otherwise.

Regarding the suggested issues,—

For the first, I vote Yes.

For the second, I vote that it is not necessary.

For the third, I vote Yes.

For the fourth, I vote No.

For the fifth, I vote that the whole property should have been bought.

For the sixth, I vote Yes.

For the seventh, I vote No.

For the eighth, I vote No.

It seems to me, from the exhaustive inquiry held, it would be utterly futile to expect to obtain any further information about the transaction than that which we have already got; hence I vote No to the eighth suggestion.

JOHN HOLMES.

The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.