

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THURSDAY, 17TH JUNE, 1886. (Mr. Moss, Chairman.)

Hon. Dr. POLLEN examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] The Committee would be glad to know if you have any information to lay before them in addition to that contained in your letters?—I should like to say a few words besides what is contained in the papers before the Committee.

2. Will you be good enough to state what you wish to say?—No doubt the whole case is contained in the papers; but I do not know whether the last letter which I wrote alluded to the cause of reference to the Government.

3. In connection with that letter, it is dated the 3rd July, 1884, but I take it to mean 1885?—Yes, it is so. It will be seen from the papers that my retiring allowance was granted to me under the Civil Service Act of 1866, 33rd clause; and that the law officers of the Crown, the Controller and Auditor-General, and the Assistant Controller and Auditor, have all decided that I was entitled to draw the full amount of my allowance. At the time of my retirement, the 3rd July, 1873, at which time I had attained the age of sixty years, I was by law not only entitled but required to retire from the public service. I was asked by Sir Julius Vogel in 1873 to join his Ministry on the same conditions on which I had formerly joined two other Ministries—without portfolio; and it was understood that I should not be required to live out of Auckland, but continue to discharge the duties of the position which I then held in the Civil Service. This was in May. I came down to Wellington in the end of June or July following. Mr. Reynolds was then Colonial Secretary, and I was induced to accept office with that portfolio. This upset all the the arrangements which had been made with regard to my continuing to hold office in the Civil Service, and the mistake I made was in not withdrawing at once from the Civil Service. I did not do so for the reason that I was a Minister, and unwilling to decide on my own case. It would have been necessary, if I had then given up my office, to have made fresh appointments in my place, the time not having arrived when the offices which I filled could have been distributed or done away with. I continued to hold these offices till 1876, when the Disqualification Act was passed, in which appeared a clause, a copy of which—as I was the only person affected by it—was directed to my address, which clause precluded any person holding office in the Civil Service from having a seat in the Legislature. The alternative was then before me, either to give up my portfolio and retire from the Council, or to resign my Civil Service appointments. I did so, and made no further movement with regard to my retiring allowance till 1877, when the Ministry were put out of office. I then made the application in the usual way. It was many months before I could get an answer of any kind; but after a long time I got an answer containing a decision that I could by no means accept. It was three years before I had an opportunity of getting a settlement of the question, or received any allowance at all. Members will excuse me if I refer to something personal: I am a member of the Council, supposed to be representative of property in New Zealand; my property qualification, however, is below the average. I am and always have been a poor man. Failing to receive the income I expected to receive, for three years I was subjected to pecuniary embarrassment, and was obliged to dispose of a property which I had hoped to be able to keep. When the opportunity came for getting a settlement of my claim it was prudent for me to put in one so moderate as not to admit of question, and, instead of insisting on the whole amount, I was content to draw my retiring allowance for the period of my resignation of office in 1876, hoping in this way to get a quiet settlement of the whole affair. I got my allowance on these terms, but, unfortunately, the matter was not allowed to rest there. Members will remember what took place in 1881, when the whole question was reopened and referred to the Public Accounts Committee for decision, during which time, I am informed, a very considerable difference of opinion took place amongst members, and what I may, without offence, describe as a party-fight took place over my unfortunate claim. I was laid, so to say, under the harrows. I had no opportunity of saying a word for myself, and, it being the “silly season” in journalism, the case was taken up outside, and there was hardly a paper in the colony in which my claim was not made the subject of leading articles of all kinds, but invariably unfavourable to me. It was not possible for me to sit down calmly under the kind of accusations made on the occasion, and I then took the opportunity, the question having being reopened, to put my case fully before the Government and the public as far as I could, and claim the consideration I was entitled to—the payment of the whole pension from the time of my official retirement in 1873 up to the time when I resigned my offices in 1876. That is the claim that I make now. I wish the Committee to understand that I made it in the second place because the case was reopened, and because, seeing the misapprehensions that prevailed, and the indignities to which I was subjected, it became my duty to put my case fully before the Government and the public. I have done so, and I claim the same privilege as was accorded to Mr. Gisborne, Sir William Fitzherbert, and others. “The Pensions Act, 1884,” having been passed, a case such as mine can never occur again, and I am the only person whose claim has not been settled. It is a distinction which is invidious, and, I think, ought to be removed if possible.