

on the estimates for 1890–91, and, in order that the reasons may now be succinctly stated, I beg to submit the following explanation:—

When I was in the morning asked by the Chairman if I could explain why the £3,000 was not placed on the estimates, I was fairly puzzled to give a satisfactory answer, but stated that it must have been due to my action when Under-Secretary for Defence, as the period agreed upon with Messrs. Atkinson and Kirk in which the purchase was to be completed was one year; and, as the full sum would not be required, it was deemed unnecessary to load the estimates with an amount which could not be expended during the financial year.

Not being satisfied with my reply, I took the opportunity during the luncheon-hour to look up dates, and found as follows: 1st. That on the 17th September, 1890, Parliament was practically prorogued, as no business was done after that date. 2nd. That the agreement with Messrs. Atkinson and Kirk was not concluded till the 19th September, 1890, and it was therefore too late to place on the estimates for that year.

The contention of one of the Commissioners (Mr. T. K. Macdonald) that, as it was contemplated by the late Government to make the purchase, Parliament should therefore have been informed beforehand, does not appear to carry any weight with it, and, on this point, I am supported by the opinion of officers of the Government service to whom I have stated the case, as it is palpable that until terms had been finally agreed upon, the negotiations with Messrs. Atkinson and Kirk might at any moment have fallen through; and the argument of Mr. T. K. Macdonald that the contemplated purchase should have been treated in the same manner as the construction of a proposed railway, does not seem to apply, as the railway is paid for out of “loan,” and the object of bringing such an expenditure before Parliament is that the sum required for the railway may be “ear-marked” for the purpose for which it was to be expended.

This rule does not apply to Consolidated Revenue in a case when negotiations have not been concluded in time to submit the expenditure to Parliament; and the usual course was in this case adopted, viz., to make any payments which might be required out of the amount allocated by Parliament for “Unauthorised expenditure,” and to place the balance required to complete the purchase on the next year’s estimates.

As I explained, I never was consulted by the present Defence Minister, as to the expenditure required for Defence Department for 1891–92, and had therefore no opportunity of discussing the point with him.

I presume I am in order in requesting that this explanation may be appended to the report of the Commissioners.

The Commissioners, Polhill Gully Rifle-range,
Parliament Buildings, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

C. A. HUMFREY.

No. 21.

Mr. A. B. FITCHETT to the CHAIRMAN of the COMMISSION.

DEAR SIR,—

Ohiro Farm, Wellington, 12th May, 1892.

My land joins the present rifle-range in Polhill Gully. Many of the bullets that are fired wide or too high come on to my land. I have picked up bullets and pieces of lead on several occasions three or four hundred yards inside my boundary. It is unsafe to drive cattle by or mend the fences anywhere near the line of fire while practice is going on. No accident has ever happened to my knowledge on my property through rifle-shooting. Firing-parties have always stopped for a few minutes, when asked to do so, to allow persons to pass. I intend shortly to make roads and cut up some of my land near the range; therefore I protest against it being permanently used for that purpose, as no person would ever think of occupying a few acres of land where they were liable to an accident at any time.

I am, &c.,

The Chairman, Polhill Gully Commission.

ASHTON B. FITCHETT.

The following petition was presented:—

To Messrs. T. Kennedy Macdonald, Esquire, J. H. Baker, Esquire, and A. Saunders, Esquire, Commissioners appointed to inquire into the purchase of the Polhill Gully rifle-range by the Government.

THE petition of the undersigned residents of Polhill Gully and the surrounding neighbourhood humbly sheweth,—

1. That your petitioners are resident in or near Polhill Gully, in the City of Wellington.
2. That for some years past a Government rifle-butts has been placed in the Polhill Gully, within the city boundary.
3. That several accidents have occurred by reason of the said rifle-butts, and, owing to the large increase of population in the neighbourhood of the said rifle-butts, the same are very dangerous to the inhabitants.

Wherefore, your petitioners humbly pray that you will be pleased to obtain the removal from the Polhill Gully of the said rifle-butts above mentioned.

And your petitioners will ever pray, &c.

Dated this 9th day of May, 1892.

[Here follow seventy-one signatures.]

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, nil; printing (1,350 copies), £30.

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBURX, Government Printer, Wellington.—1892.

Price 1s.]