

1892.

NEW ZEALAND.

PETITION OF WORLEY BASSETT EDWARDS, ESQUIRE.

Presented by Captain Russell, and ordered to be printed.

To the Honourable the Members of the House of Representatives of the
Colony of New Zealand, in Parliament assembled.

THE humble petition of WORLEY BASSETT EDWARDS, of the City of Wellington, in New Zealand, Esquire, sheweth, as follows:—

1. That in and for many years prior to the years 1889 and 1890 your petitioner was a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand, in large practice in the City of Wellington, and that your petitioner was reputed to possess a special knowledge of the laws relating to Natives and to Native lands in the said colony.

2. In the year 1889 the Parliament of the Colony of New Zealand passed a statute intituled “The Native Land Courts Act Amendment Act, 1889,” whereby provision was made for the appointment of a Commission to ascertain and determine claims to Native lands, as upon reference to the said statute will more fully appear.

3. Soon after the termination of the session of Parliament of 1889 the Under-Secretary for Native Affairs, by direction of the Minister of Native Affairs, waited upon your petitioner at his office in Wellington, and informed your petitioner that he, the said Under-Secretary, was directed by the Hon. the Minister for Native Affairs then holding office to ascertain whether your petitioner would accept the position of Commissioner under the statute mentioned in the last paragraph. At the same time the said Under-Secretary for Native Affairs then informed your petitioner that the Hon. the Minister for Native Affairs considered that the Commissioner should receive the same salary and allowances as the Chief Judge of the Native Land Court—to wit, the sum of £700 per annum and certain travelling-allowances; and that if your petitioner accepted the said appointment he would be at liberty to continue the practice of his profession as a barrister and solicitor.

4. Your petitioner thereupon informed the said Under-Secretary—as the fact was—that your petitioner had in the preceding month of May had a careful balance of his books made for partnership purposes for the four years that had elapsed since the death of a former partner, and that the result showed that your petitioner was making a net income of £2,250 per annum. Your petitioner also informed the said Under-Secretary that it was improbable that your petitioner could accept the said office of Commissioner unless he received the same salary and allowances as a Judge of the Supreme Court, and unless your petitioner was also at liberty to carry on the practice of his profession as a barrister and solicitor; but that he, your petitioner, would consider the matter, and would let the said Under-Secretary know shortly his decision upon it.

5. Shortly after this interview your petitioner again saw the said Under-Secretary, and intimated to him that he, your petitioner, had determined to adhere to his first impression, and that he would not accept the office unless he received as Commissioner the same salary and allowances as those of a Judge of the Supreme Court, and unless he was also at liberty to carry on the practice of his profession. Your petitioner heard nothing further about the matter for some time, and he considered that the negotiation was at an end.

6. On the 15th October, 1889, however, your petitioner received a message from the Hon. the Native Minister requesting your petitioner to call upon him at the Government Buildings.

7. Your petitioner did so, and the Hon. the Native Minister formally offered your petitioner the appointment of Commissioner, at a salary of £1,200 a year, and £1 ls. per day travelling-allowance, with the liberty of private practice. The Hon. the Native Minister also informed your petitioner that it was estimated that the work would last from five to ten years.

8. Your petitioner then informed the Hon. the Native Minister that since the said Under-Secretary had spoken to your petitioner upon the matter a change had taken place in his business arrangements, and that it was hardly likely that he could accept the appointment, and that if he did so he did not think that he could accept less than he had already stated—namely, the salary and allowances of a Judge of the Supreme Court, with liberty of private practice. Your petitioner also informed the Hon. the Native Minister that his books had been balanced and his income from his practice had been found to be as previously stated.