

1892.

NEW ZEALAND.

WEBSTER'S LAND-CLAIMS.

[Continuation of A.-4, Session II., 1891.]

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,— Westminster Chambers, 13, Victoria Street, London, S.W., 21st July, 1891.

In further reference to the land-claims of Mr. William Webster, I beg to enclose copy of a letter from the Colonial Office, covering one from the Foreign Office, with other papers, which are annexed, with the exception of the Law Officers' report, which I was requested to return. Copy of my reply to the Colonial Office is also enclosed.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure 1.

The COLONIAL OFFICE to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,— Colonial Office, Downing Street, 3rd July, 1891.

With reference to the letter from this department of the 26th of January last, and to previous correspondence, respecting Mr. W. Webster's claims in respect of land in New Zealand, I am directed by Lord Knutsford to transmit to you copies of the correspondence noted in the margin* on the subject.

His Lordship proposes to observe, in reply to the Foreign Office letter of the 27th June, that the reference to the colonial law of 1856 in the note to Mr. Lincoln of January 16th was obviously a mistake, and Lord Knutsford regrets that it was not observed at the time, for it was in 1841 that Mr. Webster submitted his claims to the Commissioners, under the Act of 1841, with full notice that if he adopted this course he must be held to claim as a British subject; as will be seen on reference to page 6 of the colonial parliamentary paper, a copy of which was transmitted to the Foreign Office in the letter from this department of the 2nd December, 1887. The Act of 1856 appointed a different Commissioner, with further powers, but the machinery so constituted was in continuation of the provisions of the Act of 1841. It is therefore, it would appear, immaterial whether Mr. Webster formally laid his claims before the Commissioner under the Act of 1856; and, indeed, it would seem that the claims were then submitted not by him personally or directly, but by persons to whom he had resigned whatever interest he had under any purchases of land from Natives.

I am to request that you would be so good as to state whether, so far as your experience of Mr. Webster's case enables you to say, the proposed reply is accurate and sufficient.

I am to request that the copy of the Law Officers' opinion may be returned, as it is a confidential paper.

I am, &c.,

Sir F. D. Bell, K.C.M.G., C.B.

JOHN BRAMSTON.

Sub-enclosure 1.

The COLONIAL OFFICE to the FOREIGN OFFICE.

SIR,— Downing Street, 22nd December, 1890.

With reference to your letter of the 22nd ultimo, and to previous correspondence in connection with Mr. Webster's claims in respect of land in New Zealand, I am directed by Lord Knutsford to transmit to you, to be laid before the Marquis of Salisbury, a copy of the report which has been received from the Law Officers on the case. His Lordship would propose to forward for the information of the Government of New Zealand and for that of Sir F. D. Bell copies of any communication to the United States Minister at this Court which Lord Salisbury may think fit to found on the Law Officers' opinion.

I am, &c.,

The Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office.

R. H. MEADE.

* Law Officers, 15th Dec., 1890; C.O. to F.O., 22nd Dec., 1890; F.O. to C.O., 10th Jan., 1891; C.O. to F.O., 15th Jan., 1891; F.O. to C.O., 27th June, 1891.