

1895.

NEW ZEALAND.

SIR WALTER BULLER AND THE WAKA MAORI CASE

(CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO).

Laid upon the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

Hon. the Minister of Justice.

Sir Walter Buller and the Waka Maori Case.

In this morning's issue of the *New Zealand Times*, in the column headed "Political Notes," referring to Sir Walter Buller's appearance at the bar of the House of Representatives, appears a statement in the following words: "Did you ever furnish an account for costs for £7,000?—Never. The largest bill of costs I ever had the pleasure of furnishing"—Sir Walter's face broadens into a big smile—"the pleasure of rendering was for £2,500 in the *Waka Maori* case, Sir. The Solicitor-General on that occasion, I remember, sent it back to me to 'pad it,' as it was to be taxed. I at once added £1,000, and fighting out the matter got my £2,500."

Later in the same column a further statement appears: "Solicitor-General disappears, becomes from the Solicitor-General's office."

I have no hesitation in saying that the first statement is absolutely untrue, and that the second referring to this office I do not believe to be true.

In the records of this case, I find only one bill rendered to the Government by Messrs. Buller and Lewis, being their costs as between solicitor and client:—

	£	s.	d.
This bill was for	3,415	15	3
From this was taxed off	1,130	13	2
Leaving a balance of	2,285	2	1
Less costs of taxation		1	19
Balance	2,283	2	5
Mr. Gordon Allan's fees as counsel were allowed at		86	16
Total charges	£2,369	18	11

The above bill included not only the ordinary legal charges in a suit, but large sums for out-pocket expenses, including expenses of witnesses before a Commission appointed to obtain evidence—chiefly from Maoris.

The taxation of these costs took place in October, 1877, and was conducted on behalf of the Government by Mr. E. Stafford, who at that time held the office of Assistant Law Officer. The fact that £1,130 13s. 2d. was taxed off shows it was not a friendly taxation, the claimants having to pay costs thereof; and the papers show that, as far as Mr. Stafford was concerned, it was rather of a hostile nature. I have already denied the allegation reported to have been made by Sir Walter Buller as far as I am concerned; and, from my knowledge of Mr. Stafford, I must decline to believe he would have taken the action indicated in the remarks attributed to Sir Walter Buller respecting my office. The only officers in the Crown Law Office at this time were Mr. Stafford and myself, excepting the clerk, who certainly would not have returned a bill of costs for any purpose unless so instructed.

I have not communicated in any way with Mr. Stafford herein; but I have deemed it my duty, in justice to myself and the gentleman then officially associated with me, at once to state these facts, leaving it to you to take such further action as you may deem necessary.

Crown Law Offices, 29th October, 1895.

W. S. REID.

DEAR SIR,—

Wellington, 30th October, 1895.

When I read the statement alleged to have been made by Sir Walter Buller before the bar of the House on Monday night, with reference to his bill of costs in the *Waka Maori* case, and his assertion that his original bill had been sent back to him by you (you then and now being the Solicitor-General) to increase it for the purposes of taxation, I anticipated that you must refute that statement. Your letter to the Minister of Justice, published in this morning's *Times*, does so.