

responsible person to receive the papers relating to his application. The office opens at 9 a.m., and if your messenger is there before that hour he can see the safe unlocked and receive the file from the accountant.

The Right Hon. the Premier.

I have, &c.,

J. C. MARTIN, Public Trustee.

No. 3.

The Right Hon. the PREMIER to the PUBLIC TRUSTEE.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 13th July, 1898.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of even date, and forward you herewith a letter from Mr. Wason, M.H.R.; his remarks in the House; also my remarks, and the request that he would give me the information upon which he bases his charges. This he has done for submission to you. I feel satisfied that the honourable gentleman has done you an injustice. On receipt of your reply to the charges, I shall forward it on to the honourable member, and will take such steps as in the interest of your department and yourself the subject demands.

I have, &c.,

The Public Trustee, Wellington.

R. J. SEDDON.

No. 4.

The PUBLIC TRUSTEE to the Right Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Public Trust Office, Wellington, 14th July, 1898.

I have the honour to acknowledge your letter of the 13th instant. It is impossible, without exceeding the language which should be used in an official communication, to adequately characterise Mr. Wason's attack upon myself. His charges and insinuations against me are each and all false. Neither with reference to his case nor to any other have I at any time been actuated or influenced by political feeling. Beyond Mr. Wason's personal assertion he has not furnished a particle of proof, and I again ask that the strictest and fullest inquiry may be made into my conduct. I do not care by what tribunal, so long as it is an impartial one; and I am perfectly ready to submit my conduct to the judgment of, say, Captain Russell, Mr. Rolleston, and Mr. Buchanan.

As you are aware, the appointment to this office was none of my seeking, and when you offered it to me I declined it because I had heard that politics influenced the office, and, as I told you, I never had, and never would, take any official position with which politics had anything whatever to do. You assured me that politics had nothing to do with the Public Trust Office. What you wanted was that it should be kept clear of politics, and that the Public Trustee should be in charge of the office, and solely responsible for it and its business, and at my request you removed the business of the Advances to Settlers Department from the Public Trust Office. This meant a loss to me of £200 a year, but I made my request because I thought it absolutely essential to the well-being of the Public Trust Office that it should not be in any way mixed up with any other department under Government control; and, from the time of my appointment, I defy any person to show that politics or political feeling, the wish to please or to abstain from pleasing Ministers, has in any way interfered with or influenced a single act of mine.

Neither yourself nor any member of the Government has ever attempted to influence me, nor have the Colonial Treasurer or Native Minister, although they are by law members of the office Board, ever since I have been Public Trustee, attended a meeting of the Board. Indeed, with the exception of the Hon. Mr. Carroll, who called to confer with me on some few actions about Native affairs, I do not recollect an instance of any Minister having put his foot inside this office.

I have impressed upon the members of my staff that this office is essentially a non-political one, that they have nothing to do with politics, or the wishes and feelings of any person outside the office; and I have told members of both sides of the House, who have seen me on business, and also the representatives of newspapers who are opposed to the present Government, that if there is anything they want to know about the office that I can—without disclosing the affairs of private clients—let them know, that I should be only too happy to do so, as I feel that the office is a State institution, and that the Public Trustee was appointed to, if need be, stand between the Government and the interests of those under his charge.

Mr. Wason first alludes to "some few weeks of delay." I do not know whether he means to insinuate that the delay was on my part; if he does, his insinuation is false, as I shall show, later on, the papers left my hands the same day as I received them. He next says, "A trifling correspondence took place" as to who was to be the valuer. I had no correspondence with Mr. Wason or his solicitors on the point whatever. He next says, "As soon as the Public Trustee had agreed" that Mr. McMillan should value. I never agreed that Mr. McMillan should value. Mr. Wason next says, "A considerable time elapsed, some two or three weeks, perhaps. . . . 'A' wanted to know why something had not been done." Mr. Wason's application is dated the 8th March, it was received in this office on the 14th, and was replied to on the 21st. Mr. Wason next says, "After still further delay they managed to get out of the Public Trust Office this fact, that the Public Trustee had found out," that Mr. Wason was a political opponent of the Government. This is false. I heard nothing whatever of Mr. Wason or his politics. Mr. Wason then charges me with having delayed the matter as long as I could in order to do him injury. I did not delay the matter at all. He then says, "and instead of doing what he had agreed to do" (I had agreed to do nothing) "he wrote a most offensive memorandum, saying he had made private inquiries as to the value of the land, and 'A's' statements were altogether wrong." I never wrote any such letter.