

1898.

NEW ZEALAND.

THE NEW ZEALAND CROSS

(APPLICATION FOR, BY MR. H. WRIGG): PAPERS ADVERSE TO BESTOWAL.

*Return to an Order of the House of Representatives dated the 31st day of August, 1898.**Ordered, "That there be laid before this House copies of all correspondence adverse to the bestowal of the New Zealand Cross upon Mr. Harry Wrigg."—(MR. CARSON.)*

Colonel McDONNELL to the Hon. the DEFENCE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Wellington, 10th March, 1898.

I beg leave to call your attention to a local that appeared in the *Evening Post* of the 24th ultimo, which reads as follows:—

"Mr. Harry Wrigg, at one time in the Public Works Department in Wellington, and now a resident of Auckland, is to receive the New Zealand Cross for distinguished services during the Maori war."

It is unnecessary for me to say that this public intimation of the Government's intention to decorate Mr. Wrigg with the New Zealand Cross has caused a very great amount of astonishment, indignation, and disgust, not only among the present holders of the New Zealand Cross, but also among Volunteers, who rightly consider it their bounden duty to protect the dignity of this much-prized decoration.

I, as an old officer, personally have known this man ever since he first joined the Militia some thirty years ago. Had he on any occasion ever exhibited any "marked bravery in action" I must necessarily have heard the circumstances commented upon. Wrigg's name, to my knowledge, or the knowledge of the many men I have spoken to, and who have been with him during his Militia career, has never been mentioned as a "foremost man."

If, after the expiration of upwards of thirty years, Wrigg's "conspicuous bravery in action" for the first time is announced to his astonished comrades, where is the finality of these investigations for these decorations to cease?

I therefore, on behalf of myself and other holders of the New Zealand Cross, many of whom have authorised me so to do, together with a large section of the Volunteers throughout this Island, most respectfully petition that you, as Defence Minister of New Zealand, will not permit Her Majesty's most prized military decoration to be prostituted, and to be made a reward for political services rendered.

I remain, &c.,

THOMAS McDONNELL,

Lieut.-Colonel, New Zealand Militia, Wanganui.

The Hon. the Defence Minister, Wellington.

Mr. W. LINGARD to the UNDER-SECRETARY for DEFENCE.

SIR,—

Wellington, 12th March, 1898.

I telephoned to you yesterday asking you if you would oblige by letting me know whether it was correct, as stated in the *Evening Post*, that a Mr. Wrigg, of Auckland, was about to receive the New Zealand Cross. To this you replied that it was correct, but on my asking you for particulars you declined to furnish me with same, referring me for any information that I might require to the *Gazette*.

As, necessarily, you must have known Mr. Wrigg's name and the information I desired to obtain did not appear in that paper, am I to presume that the department you represent does not desire to have the circumstances surrounding the recommendation for this decoration looked into?

On behalf of myself and other holders of the New Zealand Cross, who one and all received these decorations or were recommended for them a quarter of a century or more since, and also on behalf of many old Volunteers who saw active service in the sixties, I am requested to inform you that we unanimously consider the reopening of claims after a lapse of thirty odd years is quite contrary to all military procedure, and totally dissimilar to the precedent laid down by Her Majesty the Queen in connection with the presentation of the Victoria Cross.

I am also desired to ask you if you would oblige by letting me know by whom Mr. Wrigg was recommended for this decoration, the date on which Mr. Wrigg was recommended, and the particulars of the conspicuous bravery for which Mr. Wrigg is thus to be decorated? Waiting your reply,

I remain, &c.,

Sir Arthur Douglas, Defence Department.

W. LINGARD, N.Z.C.