

The following exhibits were handed in by Mr. McKerrow: Letter from Messrs. McNab and Watson, Invercargill, offering the Otahu Estate for sale; report on the estate by Mr. C. C. Sproule, valuer, Invercargill; report from the Land Purchase Board to the Government, recommending the purchase of the estate, and the approval of the Government thereon; further correspondence concluding the purchase, and maps of the estate.

The Committee then adjourned.

TUESDAY, 9th AUGUST, 1898.

The Committee met.

Present: Mr. R. Thompson (Chairman), Mr. Flatman, Mr. Gilfedder, Hon. Mr. J. McKenzie, Hon. Mr. Rolleston, Mr. J. W. Thomson, and Mr. Wason.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed.

The Committee further considered the question of the purchase of the Otahu Estate.

The Hon. Mr. Ward and Mr. Kelly, M.H.R.'s, attended the meeting. Mr. J. McKerrow, Chairman, Land Purchase Board, was also in attendance.

Mr. Kelly handed in the following statement, which was read for the Committee:—

“Purchase of the Otahu Estate.—After hearing Mr. McKerrow's statement (while still of the opinion that the land is comparatively valueless for settlement purposes) I am satisfied that the Land Purchase Board purchased the estate after careful consideration, and that no undue influence was brought to bear upon the department.
“J. W. KELLY.”

The Hon. Mr. Ward expressed his dissatisfaction with the foregoing statement, and repeated his request that his witnesses should be examined by the Committee.

On motion of the Hon. Mr. J. McKenzie, it was resolved, That the evidence and statements given by Mr. Kelly and Mr. McKerrow before the Committee on the 4th instant, and taken down, should be printed and circulated amongst the members of the Committee; and that, pending such resolution being carried out, further consideration of the question before the Committee stand adjourned.

The Committee then adjourned.

TUESDAY, 23RD AUGUST, 1898.

The Committee met.

Present: Mr. R. Thompson (Chairman), Mr. Gilfedder, Mr. Hogg, Hon. Mr. J. McKenzie, Hon. Mr. Rolleston, Mr. Wason.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed.

The Committee further considered the question of the purchase of the Otahu Estate.

The Hon. Mr. Ward, M.H.R., and Mr. J. McKerrow, Chairman, Land Purchase Board, attended the meeting.

The Hon. Mr. J. McKenzie moved, That Mr. John Batger be examined, and his evidence taken down.

And the question being put, the Committee divided, and their names were taken down as follows:—

Ayes, 2.—Hon. Mr. J. McKenzie, Mr. R. Thompson.

Noes, 2.—Hon. Mr. Rolleston, Mr. Wason.

The voting being equal, the Chairman recorded his casting-vote in favour of the “*Ayes*.”

The motion was therefore carried in the affirmative.

Mr. J. Batger was then sworn and examined, and his evidence taken down.

The Committee then considered their report.

Mr. Wason moved, That the report be as follows:—

“The Committee, having heard the statements of Mr. McKerrow, Hon. Mr. Ward, and Mr. Batger, is satisfied that there is no ground whatever for any charges in connection with the purchase of the Otahu Estate having been made against the Hon. Mr. Ward or the Land Purchase Department.”

The Hon. Mr. Rolleston moved, as an amendment, That the following be the report of the Committee:—

“This Committee is of opinion that no charge has been substantiated against the Land Purchase Department, either as to the expediency of the purchase or the manner in which it was made, or the suitability of the land for settlement. With regard to the insinuations said to have been made against Mr. Ward, the Committee do not think it their business to enter into such matters.”

And on the question being put, That the report proposed by Mr. Wason be agreed to, the Committee divided, and the names were taken down as follow:—

Ayes, 3.—Mr. Wason, Mr. Hogg, Hon. Mr. J. McKenzie.

Noes, 1.—Hon. Mr. Rolleston.

So it was resolved in the affirmative.

The Hon. Mr. J. McKenzie moved, That the evidence taken before the Committee, and printed, be attached to the report when brought up in the House.

The motion was carried on the voices.

The Committee then adjourned.
