

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Wednesday, 1st July, 1908.

EXCHANGE OF LAND IN WELLINGTON.

On the motion of Mr. FISHER (Wellington Central), it was ordered, That there be laid before this House all correspondence, plans, &c., relating to the alleged exchange of land at Woodward Street and Wellington Terrace between the Government, the Wellington City Council, and the company of T. K. Macdonald (Limited).

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Thursday, 30th July, 1908.

EXCHANGE OF LAND IN WELLINGTON.

The Hon. Mr. McNAB (Minister of Lands) brought up a return to an order of the House, on the motion of Mr. Fisher, "That there be laid before this House all correspondence, plans, &c., relating to the alleged exchange of land at Woodward Street and Wellington Terrace between the Government, the Wellington City Council, and the company of T. K. Macdonald (Limited)." He moved, That the report lie on the table.

Mr. FISHER (Wellington Central) said his object in asking that the Government should lay these papers on the table was caused by a transaction that took place in Wellington City concerning the City Council, the Government, and the firm of T. K. Macdonald (Limited). On the 28th June, 1907, a letter was written by the Commissioner of Crown Lands in Wellington offering the Wellington City Council a section of land on Wellington Terrace measuring roughly 40 ft. by 49 ft. The matter was submitted to the Finance Committee of the Council, and it was decided that the Council should purchase the land. Then a letter was written by the Mayor of Wellington to the Minister of Lands, pointing out that the Wellington City Council was prepared to buy the land, and suggesting that the City Council should pay the £652 which the Government was asking for the land, and that the Government should make out the title in the name of T. K. Macdonald. Now, he had since found reason to object to the transaction, and he had asked that the papers should be laid on the table, and for this, amongst other reasons: that under section 117 of the Land Act of 1892 it was not legal for the Government to sell a portion of Crown land except under three conditions, and not one of those conditions was fulfilled as regards the piece of land in question. There were three adjoining owners to this piece of land on Wellington Terrace—on the south side, the Hon. T. K. Macdonald; on the east, Jacob Joseph; and on the north, Mrs. M. A. Williams. The Government had sold the land not to an adjoining owner at all, so far as he could learn, but to a private company in Wellington, without competition, without asking the adjoining owners if they were prepared to buy. The land, as a matter of fact, had been in the hands of or in the use of Mrs. Williams, who lived next door. She had a motor-car shed on the land, and he believed had paid rates upon it; yet, notwithstanding this fact, she discovered one morning that the gates were being knocked off, and the motor-car shed was being destroyed. On inquiry she was told that the Government had sold the land to Mr. Macdonald. Up to this point the facts would seem to place the Government in a false position. The Government had been placed in a false position, but not on its own initiative. The Government had had the whole position misrepresented, and misrepresented for the purpose of private profit on the part of those concerned. He said that without any hesitation whatever. It was represented to the Minister of Lands that if he transferred this section of land of $6\frac{1}{2}$ perches opposite the gentlemen's club, on Wellington Terrace, to the Wellington City Council, which in turn would hand it over to Mr. Macdonald, the Council in exchange therefor was to receive 4 perches of land at the corner of Woodward Street and Wellington Terrace. The transaction went through. He (Mr. Fisher) interviewed the Minister about it subsequently, and asked him what the understanding was, and the Minister said the understanding was that $6\frac{1}{2}$ perches was being transferred to the Wellington City Council on the understanding that £652 was paid by the City Council for the $6\frac{1}{2}$ perches, and that 4 perches at the corner was to be transferred to the City of Wellington for street-widening purposes. Now, how much was transferred to the City of Wellington? Not 4 perches at all, but forty-seven hundredths of a perch, and the Minister did not know of this until months after the thing went through. He (Mr. Fisher) went and stated what the position was, and the Minister could hardly realise it. The letter from Mr. Macdonald was there on the file, and it only went to show how conveniently mistakes might be made at the proper time. Somewhere on that file there was a plan, and on the plan there was shown a section of land containing by admeasurement 4 perches. That was the piece of land proposed to be exchanged to the City of Wellington by T. K. Macdonald (Limited), whereas the letter referring to the matter said that four or five perches would be transferred. The plan said 4 perches, and the Cabinet was so deceived on the matter that there was not a member