

## REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON PETITION OF CERTAIN RESIDENTS OF THE BULLER DISTRICT.

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THE Committee beg to report as follows :—

Owing to the vagueness of the allegations in the petition, the Committee had some little difficulty in determining to what their inquiry should extend. They believe that the House desire to give the honourable Member for Buller an opportunity of vindicating his character and honor, as a Member of this House, from charges made against him by the Provincial Council of Nelson, and would not expect the Committee to examine into vague accusations and recriminations between Mr. O'Connor and individuals. They therefore determined, at an early stage of the inquiry, to confine themselves to the question, "Did a knowledge obtained by Mr. O'Connor, as a Member of the Provincial Council, of the intentions of the Westport Committee, to recommend the reserve from sale of certain lands at Westport, induce or contribute to induce him to forestall the Committee's intentions, by the purchase of these lands on his private account?"

Copies of the evidence taken by the Committee of the Provincial Council of Nelson were put in evidence, and Mr. O'Connor submitted himself to examination on oath, and to cross-examination by counsel on behalf of the Speaker and some Members of the Provincial Council of Nelson.

Your Committee find—(1.) That Mr. O'Connor had the intention of purchasing the land in question in Westport some time prior to the meeting of the Westport Sea Encroachment Committee. (2.) That he was present in the Committee Room during the deliberations of the Committee, and had an opportunity of hearing those deliberations. (3.) That he having stated on oath that he did not hear those deliberations, your Committee are bound to believe him. (4.) That he has sufficiently accounted, by the production of documentary evidence, for his having, immediately after the deliberations of that Committee, purchased the land in question, without having recourse to the supposition that he heard, or was in any respect influenced by a knowledge of, those deliberations. (5.) That, before his conduct was publicly called in question, he, as soon as the resolution of the Committee was communicated to him, offered to surrender the land for the public benefit. (6.) That your Committee are of opinion that Mr. O'Connor did not act in any way dishonourably in the matter, and that there was nothing in his conduct connected with that purchase derogatory to his character as a Member of this House.

Your Committee will only add, that, whilst they considered it unnecessary to put the public to the expense of calling witnesses from a distance on such a matter, they gave time for production of witnesses, and they were willing to adjourn further for that purpose, on payment of costs of adjournment, which was declined; and that they attach no weight whatever to the declaration put in of one J. M. Langdon, it being improbable in itself, and contradicted by the declaration of Mr. A. Wilkin.

THOMAS B. GILLIES,  
Chairman.

23rd August, 1872.

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