

I have delayed replying to Mr. Batkin's letter earlier, because I was reluctant to add to the press of business in your department during session ; but I must press my claim to redress for the very serious loss inflicted on me by the admitted negligence of public officers. I have up to this time been thwarted—I think unfairly. I do not like to petition the House or call for a copy of this correspondence, but, if I get no redress in any way, I certainly shall do so, or try and have it done by some other member.

I have, &c.,

WM. SWANSON.

The Hon. the Commissioner of Stamps, Wellington.

No. 16.

Mr. E. BRANDON to Mr. SWANSON.

(No. 289.)
SIR,—

Office of the Commissioner of Stamp Duties, Wellington,
11th October, 1873.

I have the honor, by direction of the Hon. the Commissioner of Stamp Duties, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 13th ultimo, and in reply to inform you that the view taken by the Commissioner in this matter has been already very fully explained to you. If the Commissioner had been able to furnish you with the name of any individual who could be said to be wholly responsible for the alleged negligence, he would at once have communicated his name, that you might have tested the question by suing him in a Court if you had so desired: this, as you have already been informed, he is unable definitely to do. For this reason, also, he has been unable to comply with your alternative request for the dismissal of the officer. As the charge cannot be brought home to any particular individual, the Commissioner does not see what redress can be afforded to you. Had you at first, when you were inconvenienced by the delay, taken the course you have adopted latterly of applying to the head office, no loss or damage would have occurred.

I have, &c.,

E. BRANDON.

W. Swanson, Esq., Auckland.

No. 17.

Mr. SWANSON to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Auckland, 20th January, 1875.

I have the honor to enclose copy of report of Public Petitions Committee on a petition presented by me to the House of Representatives during the last session.

The subject of my petition was the loss sustained by me caused by the detention in Wellington of a transfer of an interest in Dixon's No. 1 Gold Mining Company ; and as, according to the concluding paragraph of the report, the Government is recommended to make inquiry during the recess, to ascertain the amount of my loss, I have the honor to submit the names of some gentlemen in Auckland and neighbourhood whose position commands respect, and who, having been shareholders in the company, would be able to testify as to my loss—viz., Messrs. Benjamin Tonks, J. Howard, W. J. Taylor, A. K. Taylor, Thos. Short, E. Owen, T. Macready, and A. Dingwall ; as also the books of the company at their office here.

I have, &c.,

WM. SWANSON.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

Enclosure in No. 17.

REPORT of PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE on Petition of WILLIAM SWANSON.

PETITIONER states that he took a document to be stamped at the Auckland Stamp Office in October, 1869, and was informed that the said document would have to be sent to Wellington to be stamped. That petitioner made repeated applications at the Auckland Stamp Office for the document, but did not get it until more than twelve months had elapsed, in consequence of which he had sustained great loss and annoyance. Petitioner prays the House to take his case into consideration and afford such relief as may appear right and fit.

The Committee have examined all available witnesses likely to throw light on this case, and also the documentary evidence forwarded to the Committee by the Government, and after carefully considering the matter the Committee have directed me to report as follows:—

Your Committee find that no proper register has been kept of how or when deeds have been received, or how they have been disposed of, other than by the loose registration sheets. That under such circumstances it appears to be difficult to individualize the responsibility in any case of neglect that may crop up. That in the case of the petitioner, in reference to the delay in returning an agreement after being stamped, your Committee are of opinion that gross neglect in the department has been proved, but are not prepared to confine the blame to any one officer.

They are of opinion, however, that primarily the blame rests with the chief clerk of the Stamp Office in Wellington, inasmuch as he must be held responsible for the proper conduct of the business of the office.

Your Committee are further of opinion that the petitioner has sustained loss in consequence of the agreement in question being detained in the Stamp Office, but are not in a position to state the amount. They recommend the Government to make inquiry during the recess to ascertain the loss, and take steps to arrange for a settlement of the claim with the petitioner.

THOMAS KELLY,
Chairman.

27th August, 1874.