

*Hon. Sir D.  
McLean.*  
30th Sept., 1875.

he had purchased, only one case of dispute occurred. Mr. Preece said he had seldom met with purchases so well got through. I took every possible step to find out the truth or otherwise of these reports, and I satisfied myself that the public were vindicated.

869. Had Colonel McDonnell made these same complaints to you previously to your going to the North?—I cannot say at what date Colonel McDonnell made his complaints. He is generally very excited, and comes to head quarters with complaints, but I must say that I have not taken much notice of them, because I have often found that his complaints were merely imaginary grievances. He is evidently a discontented man, and I have always done all I could for him. He himself admits that he had interests in some of those blocks, that were bequeathed to him by his father. I did not wish to be severe on him as he had served the country, and he has had perfect fair-play at my hands. I have found that most of these accusations that he has brought forward can be proved to be without foundation, and they are so proved by the evidence of facts, and the evidence of people who know the transactions.

870. Has Mr. Brissenden been furnished with a copy of this letter?—No.

871. *The Chairman.*] Did you authorize Brissenden to cut out the timber block for Mr. Dargaville, which he did cut out?—No, he had no authority to do so. I told you so distinctly the other day.

872. You are aware that Stannus Jones states that Mr. Brissenden informed him that he was directed by Dr. Pollen to lease land for himself? I read you that letter the other day?—Yes, you did read that letter; but I can only state that it seems to me to be only wasting time after you have Dr. Pollen's testimony that he has never bought a piece of Native land.

873. But this is a question with regard to Mr. Brissenden?—I cannot answer for his statements.

874. *Sir G. Grey.*] I wish to say that for many years Colonel McDonnell served under me, and I certainly did not experience any of those difficulties myself in respect to him which have been stated by Sir D. McLean to this Committee. I found him an officer easily managed, and one who conducted very important and difficult duties very well. I think it necessary to say that, because he lies under serious allegations. I would ask, further, did you investigate the statement made by Colonel McDonnell, in this letter of 25th January, about Mr. Russell?—No; I only found the letter the other day. I may say that I believe Mr. Brissenden never was employed by any private parties to make purchases of that kind whilst he was an officer of the Government.

875. I should like to put the question in another form. Colonel McDonnell states that Mr. Brissenden informed him that he wished to reserve some of the kauri timber that Colonel McDonnell had reported on for Mr. Thomas Russell, as that gentleman had a contract from the Admiralty for spars, and that he (Brissenden) had authority from you and Sir J. Vogel to use his own discretion in negotiations of this kind at the time he received his appointment. Was that allegation one of those you inquired into when you went to the North?—I do not think it was. I do not think that was brought prominently before me in any way. I gave Colonel McDonnell and Mr. Brissenden full opportunities of meeting and explaining these things. I went up with a prejudice on my mind that matters were not as they ought to be in the North, but on inquiry I found that there was nothing wrong.

876. *Mr. Rolleston.*] Have you any knowledge whatever of any contract having been entered into for supplying the Admiralty with kauri spars?—I have heard that such was the case, but I merely heard it as every one else heard it.

877. Has there been no correspondence about it with the Government?—No, I have not seen any.

878. In the arrangement made by the Government for the purchase of timber land, has reference been had to the intentions of the Government as expressed in the Forest Trees Act?—In purchasing timber in the North, I was anxious that all the kauri forests of any value that could be secured should be secured, and also that agricultural land of good quality should be acquired even in preference to forest land. With regard to forests, I was anxious that the Government should get them, rather than that they should pass into the hands of speculators.

879. Do you think that the arrangements of Mr. Russell are consistent with the intentions of the Government as expressed in the Forest Trees Act?—I refer to the arrangements in respect of the purchase of the Tairua and other blocks?—They are completely in conformity with the expressed wish and desire of the gentleman who was Superintendent of Auckland at that time. He was written to and asked whether he approved of these purchases, and he so far approved of them that he advanced £2,000 of his own money in order to secure these purchases, and he had repeatedly urged upon the Government the necessity of supplying Mr. Mackay with money, as he was anxious that these lands should be secured. The £200,000 originally granted for the purchase of Native lands was only expended on the advice of the Superintendent of the province. The Superintendent had been written to on this subject, and his reply was printed and laid on the table of the House. (Sir Donald McLean here read Mr. T. B. Gillies' reply above referred to.)

880. *Mr. Sheehan.*] I was a member of the Executive, and I am sure that I and my colleagues had no knowledge of these timber transactions. An advance was made by us to enable Mr. Mackay to buy land on the Coromandel Peninsula, but I was not aware of any other leases. When the advance was made to Mr. Mackay, I was not aware, nor do I think any other member of the Executive was aware, that these particular lands were saddled with agreements. I do not know, however, that I would have given different advice if I had been aware of it, because I always looked to the securing of gold fields as a matter of moment.

881. *Hon. Sir D. McLean.*] I believe that the then Superintendent would readily admit that he was quite aware of the agreements of these companies all over that Peninsula, and, at all events, it is a fact that they have been entered into as far back as 1864, and carried on up to 1869. They have been validated by an Act of the General Assembly, and the Government had no other right but the gold mining right originally ceded to them by the Natives, who never agreed to cede the timber.

882. *Mr. Rolleston.*] Have we not it in evidence that timber growing upon land is part of the land?—The Government got from time to time from the Natives the right of mining over this land on which timber was growing, but not the right to the timber. [Sir D. McLean read a letter from Dr.