

1878.

NEW ZEALAND.

PETITION OF WILLIAM COLENZO.

Presented to the House of Representatives, 24th September, 1878, and ordered to be printed.

To the Honorable the House of Representatives in Parliament assembled.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF WILLIAM COLENZO, OF NAPIER,

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH,—

THAT your petitioner was for several years, until lately, the Government Inspector of Schools for this provincial district.

That, from the formation of the Province of Hawke's Bay, in 1858, to 1st May, 1878, your petitioner has continuously held several important public offices—viz., Provincial Auditor, Provincial Maori Interpreter, Provincial Treasurer (without clerk), and (twice) Provincial Inspector of Schools.

That he, the second time, accepted the office of Provincial Inspector of Schools in 1872, and held the same until 1st May, 1878.

That for the first four years the salary was only £100, and for the last two (complete) years £150 per annum, although the visiting the distant country schools, through want of roads, was both difficult and dangerous.

That during the whole of this time all the clerical work usually pertaining to an Education Board and Secretary (there being no Education Board in Hawke's Bay) was performed by your petitioner, even to the calculating and making out of the teachers' quarterly vouchers, which duty was here particularly heavy, as all the teachers were paid by a capitation allowance, to be calculated on the daily average attendance.

That early in 1876 (after seeing the Commissioners—the Hon. Mr. Gisborne, Mr. Seed, and Mr. Knowles—appointed by your honorable House to visit the provinces, and to see the provincial officers) your petitioner wished to resign his office and to retire on some fair allowance, but was persuaded by the Superintendent and by the principal settlers to remain in office “for the benefit of the children of the district.”

That at the end of the year 1876 he, conditionally, resigned his office, unless the Education Board (then very recently appointed) would largely increase his salary, as the many heavy duties he had to perform took up the whole of his time.

That your petitioner received two pressing official replies from the Education Board to withdraw his resignation. A correct copy of one of them is here given:—

“Napier, 8th February, 1877.

“DEAR SIR,—I have laid your letter before the Board, and they, in common with myself, regret very much that you should resign.

“It is not the amount of the salary that is worth your while to stay for; but you are appealed to on other grounds—that you are eminently fitted for the post, and that you have given satisfaction to every one concerned; that the Board cannot afford to give more at present, and appeal to your public and patriotic feelings to further, as far as in your power lies, the education of the youth of this district.

“The Board, therefore, beg you to reconsider the whole question, and continue your services for another year.—I have, &c.,

“JOSEPH RHODES,

“To the Inspector of Schools.”

“Chairman, Education Board.

That, consequently, your petitioner consented to remain in office for another year.

That in February, 1878, he reminded the Education Board of his having only consented to continue to hold office at that low salary for the year 1877, which was expired.

That then the Education Board raised his salary to £300 per annum, to commence, however, from the 1st of March, 1878.

That very soon after (early in that same month of March) your petitioner found the Education Board had adopted the peculiar opinion that they could not interfere with the appointments of teachers made by country School Committees; of such, three, at least, had then just been made, and that, too, directly against a late official letter from your petitioner to the Education Board on this subject.

That this very opinion of your petitioner (as by him officially communicated to the Hawke's Bay Education Board, and by them disallowed) has since been shown to be the correct one by the Hon. the Attorney-General.

That your petitioner, finding such to be the opinion of the Education Board, and fearing a collision ere long, resigned his office, to take place at the end of the current quarter, March.

That the Education Board accepted the same, but requested your petitioner to continue in office until the 30th of April—the newly-elected Board entering on their duties on the 1st of May.

That your petitioner again consented to do so.

That during that month of April, while busily employed in visiting the country schools, your petitioner was so greatly beset by parents of scholars, Magistrates, old settlers, teachers of schools, and children (pupils), to apply to the Education Board for the office of Inspector (which was then thrown open by advertisement to applicants), that he was induced to do so, and did so; having also been assured by members of both the old (or first) Education Board (which was still acting), and also of the new Education Board (then recently elected), that, if he would but do so, his offer would be gladly accepted. Further, the knowledge of his being about to do so kept back several private friends (eminently fit and proper persons) from applying for the said office.

That the new Education Board (or those of them who happened to be present), immediately on their sitting, appointed the present Inspector of Schools to the office (a gentleman then resident at Christchurch) at a salary of £450, with largely-increased travelling allowances, and also a Secretary at £150 per annum.

That at the same time the Education Board unanimously passed and recorded a resolution speaking most favourably of your petitioner, and at the same time sent him the following letter:—

“Hawke’s Bay Education Board, Napier, 21st May, 1878.

“SIR,—I have the honor to convey to you, on behalf of the Hawke’s Bay Education Board, its sense of the very valuable services rendered by you to the cause of education in this district during the time you held the position of Inspector of Schools, which you have just resigned. In carrying out the wish of the Board, in expressing regret at your retirement, I am glad personally to have the opportunity of thanking you for the cordial and zealous manner in which the difficult duties attached to the position of Inspector were carried out by you during the years you acted in that capacity under the late Provincial Government at the time I was Superintendent. I but do justice to the services you have rendered when I state my conviction that the efficiency of the schools is largely owing to the conscientious and earnest manner in which you discharged the duties of your office. Regretting the loss of your services,—I have, &c.,

“J. M. ORMOND,

“Chairman, Education Board of Hawke’s Bay.

“To William Colenso, Esq., Napier.”

That, under all those circumstances (herein very briefly expressed), your petitioner believes that he has a very fair claim to lay before your honorable House for some compensation, either under the head of loss of office (as hitherto commonly allowed by the Colonial Government to all Provincial Government officers on the abolition of provinces), or under that of retirement from active public service through age.

Your humble petitioner further respectfully sheweth,—

That, from the time of his arriving in New Zealand in 1834, down to (at least) the formation of this Province of Hawke’s Bay in 1858, a period of twenty-five years, your petitioner had ever been an assiduous and ready public helper of all the several British constituted authorities in New Zealand and of the Colonial Governments; which many letters of thanks for such services amply show, particularly from the British Resident, Mr. Busby; from the New South Wales Land Commissioners, Sir M. Richmond and Colonel Godfrey; from the first Governor, Captain Hobson; from Mr. Willoughby Shortland; from Sir M. Richmond, while Superintendent of the southern part of the colony; from Lieutenant-Governor Eyre; from Mr. Domett, Colonial Secretary; from Dr. Featherston, while Superintendent of Wellington; from Colonel Wyatt, commanding the 65th Regiment, while stationed here at Napier; from Mr. (afterwards Sir Donald) McLean; from Mr. Domett, the first Resident Magistrate here at Napier, 1854–56; also from many of our early settlers for help afforded them on peculiarly trying occasions between them and the Maoris (two in particular, not wholly unknown to some of the members of your honorable House, in which my own life was in jeopardy owing to my interference—I may be allowed to mention that of Mr. Barton, at the White Rocks, in 1845, and that of Mr. Guthrie, at Castlepoint, a few years later); for all of which help and aid, including the heavy manual labour in compositing and printing the Treaty of Waitanga, and all the first Proclamations, notices, and forms, and also the first *Gazette*, for the Colonial Government under Governor Hobson (all which it may be further stated—if only as a curiosity—were composited from types placed on tables and on the floor! through my not having any printers’ type-cases made for the letters of the English alphabet); for all of which assistance your petitioner never received the slightest remuneration.

Lastly, that your petitioner, having once had the honor of a seat in your honorable Assembly, and that for five successive years (during the trying times of the war—1861–65), and therefore practically knowing something of its high and equitable character, believes that your honorable House will be pleased to take these various matters, herein briefly advanced or mentioned, into its consideration, and grant to him, as an old and early pioneer in New Zealand (now nearing the “allotted threescore years and ten”), that compensation which, under all the circumstances, your honorable House may deem equitable.

And your petitioner will ever pray.

WILLIAM COLENZO.