

1883.  
NEW ZEALAND.

## WASTE LANDS COMMITTEE.

(REPORT ON THE RUSSELL EXCHANGE OF LAND BILL, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AND APPENDIX.)

*(Report brought up on 3rd day of September, 1883, and ordered to be printed.)*

### REPORT.

THE Waste Lands Committee have had the Bill intituled "The Russell Exchange of Land Act, 1883," under their careful consideration, and have taken all available evidence on it. After full investigation, their opinion is that the Bill ought to be allowed to proceed, as the Government have received the full consideration stipulated in the agreement with Mr. Russell. The Committee, herefore, hold that the Government is bound, in all fairness, to implement the engagement entered into, however irregular this transaction may have been, as, at the date of its inception, such dealings were quite common, and were not viewed with the same condemnation they would now evoke.

3rd September, 1883.

JAMES FULTON, Chairman.

### MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 31st AUGUST, 1883 (Mr. FULTON, Chairman).

Sir GEORGE GREY, M.H.R., examined.\*

1. The CHAIRMAN.] We will hear what you have to say on this matter, Sir George? What I want to say is contained in the Appendices to the Journals for 1875 (C.-3).

2. Do you wish to have the Journals? No; but I think the Committee will find it all there in a more complete form than I could give it now.

3. Mr. MACANDREW.] Could you refer the Committee to the salient points in the Appendix you have alluded to, or do you think it necessary for the Committee to read this correspondence? I think the matter would be better understood after reading it.

4. Perhaps, as Sir George has the whole thing at his fingers' ends, he might give the Committee the facts of the case as they appear to him? I stated them in the House the other night. I believe facilities were given to Mr. Russell in the original purchase which were given really to no other Queen's subjects—such as the Native officers being employed to assist in this purchase.

5. Do you refer to Mr. Mackay? No; the Native officers of the department generally; and I think that the system of buying people off—agreeing with them that they should not compete with the Government—is a very wrong one. Certainly a large number of people in the country would not go into these purchases, believing them to be unjust. Large fortunes might have been made by many men who thought them wrong, and the law declared them to be absolutely null and void; and, if so, it is difficult to see why the public should pay such an enormous sum as they are likely to pay now to a person for abandoning that which the law made null and void. Then, I think that a person saying that for a certain sum or consideration he would discontinue a transaction of this kind is detrimental to the whole public acquiring the land, and I cannot see why any payment should be made to him. I think it is unjust to the Natives; it prevents their getting the full price for their lands; and, in the next place, I think that to pay a man for ceasing to injure his fellow-men, and to compel those who are injured to pay him, is an extreme hardship.

\* This evidence was not corrected by the witness.—J. FULTON, Chairman, Waste Lands Committee.