

March could in no case be properly dealt with at a period much anterior to the expiry of the leave of absence granted to his Honour Mr. Justice Richmond.

I have felt it necessary to deal with this matter somewhat fully before reverting to the minor subject of the appointment of a secretary to the Commission. It must be apparent to you that, if I am to do the Supreme Court work as well as the work of the Commission, the placing at my disposal the services of a clerk in your department as secretary to the Commission will be quite useless alike to the public and to myself. To exemplify this, if any one who wishes to make an inquiry (of which there are a great many) has to apply in the first place to a clerk in your department, who has to apply to my secretary to make an appointment to see me, and who, after obtaining such an appointment, has again to see the person making the inquiry, it is plain that a great loss of time and much vexation will be occasioned to the public.

With regard to myself, this will not only cause me loss of time and annoyance, but it will expose me to constant personal applications which ought to be made to the secretary, but which, in the absence of a secretary at hand, will certainly be made to me. To enable the secretary to be of the slightest use either to the public or myself he must be constantly at my elbow, able from his position as my secretary to refer to me at any moment, and ready to do what he is told either by day or by night, and he must understand my ways and the work he is about. He must be as available when I am on circuit or attending the Court of Appeal as when I am actually engaged in hearing cases in the Commission Court. The necessary clerical work, so far as I am concerned, must be done at odd moments not employed in Court work or at night, and it will principally have to be done at night. If my secretary is appointed his services will be available at any moment, either during the day-time or at night, and I will be personally answerable for the due performance of his duties; but I cannot undertake this responsibility for any one else, nor do I think it reasonable that I should either undertake to instruct a novice or to practically perform his duties myself.

Apart from the fact that the public service will suffer from the proposed arrangement, I think it is highly undesirable that the Commission Court should be made to appear a branch of your department instead of an independent tribunal. Lastly, it is plain that the proposed arrangement, which will entail the payment of a double set of travelling-expenses for my secretary and for the secretary of the Commission, will, so far from resulting in a saving, result in a loss to the country.

I am, &c.,

W. B. EDWARDS.

No. 37.

LETTER addressed by the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER to Mr. EDWARDS but not despatched.

DEAR MR. EDWARDS,—

Wellington, 25th September, 1890.

I have received your letter of the 23rd instant, respecting the appointment of a secretary to the Native Land Commission, in which you also refer at length to the question of your own appointment as Judge of the Supreme Court and Commissioner.

The recollection of the Premier and myself does not correspond with your view of the circumstances and surroundings of your appointment.

In the mind of the Government, the Commission was of paramount importance, it being urgently necessary that the large number of persons who were said to have acquired lands equitably from the Natives, but whose titles could not be registered, should obtain relief, and, when you were selected for and accepted the appointment of Commissioner, the Government acquiesced in your appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court in order that you should have the proper status.

Your appointment of Commissioner, and the work of the Commission, whereby it was hoped the vexed question of the titles would be investigated with due diligence and set at rest, was, and is, in the mind of the Government, the matter of paramount importance in connection with your appointment.

With reference to your secretary also acting as secretary to the Commission, the Government have no objection to his receiving the appointment; and he can be paid at the rate of 10s. a day for each day he is engaged upon the work of the Commission. This, of course, is understood to mean not continuous pay, but the rate of remuneration when the Commission is sitting continuously, or when the work of the Commission absorbs a considerable portion of his time, and entails upon him, as stated in your letter, work outside the ordinary office-hours.

I may add that in fixing this amount it has been necessary to regard the amount received by permanent and temporary officers of the Government who are engaged in the performance of arduous and responsible duties, in many cases at a low rate of salary, which, owing to the need for retrenchment, cannot now be increased.

I remain, &c.,

E. MITCHELSON.

No. 38.

Mr. Commissioner EDWARDS to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

(Telegram.)

Wellington, 29th September, 1890.

I AM awaiting your reply to my last letter as to the appointment of secretary. In my opinion it will be a very grave mistake, on public grounds, to cause the Commission to appear to be any way subject to the control of or connected with the Native Department; and, moreover, the arrangement proposed is absolutely unworkable. Colonel Porter, who has been trying to see me for over a week, has only succeeded in catching me twice at the luncheon adjournment. I must carry on the