

1898.
NEW ZEALAND.

CHARGES MADE AGAINST THE PUBLIC TRUSTEE BY MR. J. C. WASON, M.H.R.

(CORRESPONDENCE, ETC., RELATIVE TO), IN CONNECTION WITH AN APPLICATION FOR A LOAN.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives, by leave.

No. 1.

J. C. WASON, Esq., M.H.R., to the Right Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

House of Representatives, Wellington, 12th July, 1898.

After what transpired this afternoon, in accordance with my promise I beg to hand you the following statement:—Early in the year I purchased a block of land in Canterbury, intending to borrow a portion of the purchase-money on mortgage. I had to go into the country, and left the matter in the hands of my solicitors, Messrs. Wilding and Lewis, of Christchurch. They write that the best terms were to be obtained from the Public Trustee, and they forwarded me an application-form. I declined to sign the application until it was settled who was to be the valuator. Mr. David McMillan's name was mentioned—a member of the Canterbury Land Board, and of wide experience in land-values. I at once agreed to Mr. McMillan's valuation, signed the application-form, and agreed to pay valuation-fee, of course, whether loan was granted or not.

Nothing was heard of the matter for a considerable time, when Messrs. Wilding and Lewis made further inquiry, and they forwarded a most offensive memorandum from the Public Trustee that he had made "private inquiry, land little or no value." I have not a copy of memorandum, but it was of a most insulting nature—you can no doubt procure a copy of document.

It seems to me that had not the Public Trustee deliberately wished to injure and insult me, all that was requisite was that Mr. McMillan should have sent in his valuation (a document which is always kept private), and for which I was quite willing to pay, and that then the Public Trustee could have declined the loan, and I should not have had the slightest ground of complaint.

I have only brought the matter forward in the public interest, as I think it most discreditable to a public department that its affairs should be conducted after the manner of a private detective office.

I have, &c.,

The Right Hon. Richard Seddon, Wellington.

J. CATHCART WASON.

No. 2.

The PUBLIC TRUSTEE to the Right Hon. the PREMIER.

SIR,—

Wellington, 13th July, 1898.

I to-day was informed that last night Mr. Wason made a statement in the House to the effect that I had refused to make an advance to an applicant because of such applicant's political views, or in order to curry favour with Ministers, and I have received a telegram from my Auckland agent stating that the *Herald*, in its Parliamentary news, reads, "Wason cited case where Public Trustee reported favourably certain valuations to curry favour political chief." I am completely ignorant as to what transactions Mr. Wason alludes, and if he made such a statement I can only say it is absolutely unfounded in fact.

In justice to myself, as an individual and as an officer in the Public Service, I ask that the strictest inquiry may be made into my conduct. Mr. Wason's parliamentary privilege prevents my making him prove his accusation in the Supreme Court, but I invite the fullest investigation into any of my acts, either at the bar of the House, or before any other impartial tribunal. To-day is a public holiday, and as the office-papers are kept in the strong room, of which the accountant (whom I have not seen) has the key, I have had no access to any of the office records, and I beg to suggest that you should ascertain the name of the applicant referred to by Mr. Wason, and send some