

your powers and functions as Commissioner hereunder, shall continue in full force notwithstanding that the inquiry hereby directed may be interrupted from time to time by adjournment.

In witness whereof I have hereto set my hand, and caused these presents to be issued under the seal of the said Colony, at Wellington, this 15th day of January, 1900.

RANFURLY,
Governor.

Issued in Executive Council.

ALEX. WILLIS,
Clerk of the Executive Council.

LIST OF PERSONS WHO HAVE MADE CLAIMS AGAINST THE NEW ZEALAND RAILWAY DEPARTMENT FOR DAMAGE TO THEIR PROPERTY BY FIRE, ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY SPARKS FROM RAILWAY ENGINES.

Name.	Where Fire occurred.	Date of Fire.
W. S. C. Blackley, F. E. Claasen, W. Young, H. C. Fairlie, and R. M. Paterson	Whangamarino ...	15th December, 1896.
James Wallace	Papatoitoti ...	13th January, 1898.
John Gardiner	Rakaia ...	2nd January, 1897.
Henry Mackle	Hinds ...	27th January, 1898.
James Moore	" ...	27th January, 1898.
George Williams	Woodend ...	2nd September, 1899.

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable Uchter John Mark, Earl of Ranfurly, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over Her Majesty's Colony of New Zealand and its Dependencies, and Vice-Admiral of the same.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

Your Commissioner appointed by your Excellency's letters patent of the 15th day of January, 1900, to inquire into the several matters and things hereinafter mentioned and referred to, that is to say,—

- (a.) Claims against the New Zealand Government Railway Department for damage to property, alleged to have been caused by fires due to sparks from railway engines ;
- (b.) The causes of such fires, and the extent, if any, of the damage done thereby, and as to whether they were attributable to the negligence of any persons ;
- (c.) What precautions have been taken by the Government or the officers of the said department for preventing damage from sparks caused as aforesaid, and as to the sufficiency of such precautions or otherwise,—

has now the honour to report to your Excellency as follows :—

INVESTIGATION OF CLAIMS.

Evidence was taken in respect of the various claims at the places most convenient for the claimants, who were permitted to appear in person or by counsel. Witnesses were called by them to show how the fires causing the damage originated, and the extent of the damage done by them. The officers of the department called witnesses, including the drivers of the engines supposed to have caused the fires, and the guards who were on the trains at the time, to show what care was taken. In this way all the available facts bearing on the cases were brought before your Commissioner.