



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Home and Territories Department.

FILE OF PAPERS.

SUBJECT: *J. Edwards.*

*Complaints concerning
Norfolk Is.*

MINUTES NOT TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS COVER.

9th September 1925.

25/21552

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 27th August, I have pleasure in forwarding, for your information, the following observations respecting the statements contained in the communication addressed to you by Mr. Frank Edwards, of Slapdash, Gulgong.

To enable the "deeds and papers of Norfolk Island", alleged to have been given to Governor Denison by Mr. Frederick Young, to be traced particulars will need to be furnished of the subjects to which the deeds and papers in question refer.

Mr. Edwards implies that upon the transfer of Norfolk Island to the Commonwealth the free grant of land to the Islanders was discontinued and a system of leasehold introduced. This implication is not in accordance with facts.

The Crown Lands Law 1913, which is the law at present in force in the Island, was passed by the Governor of New South Wales on the 23rd December 1913 and came into operation on the 24th December 1913. The transfer of Norfolk Island to the Commonwealth was not, however, effected until the 1st July 1914.

Although a system of leasehold is the main principle of the Crown Lands Law 1913, the Governor (since the transfer to the Commonwealth, the Governor-General) still has power to make grants of freehold.

Evidently Mr. Edwards has in mind a difficulty in regard to land tenure which arose many years prior to the transfer of the Island to the Commonwealth. The Pitcairn Islanders considered that they had an indefeasible right and title to the whole of Norfolk Island and everything it contained. This right was never admitted by the New South Wales Government, nor is it based upon any official document. As far back as 1884, Lord Loftus, Governor of New South Wales, when on a visit to the Territory, endeavoured to disabuse the minds of the Islanders of the idea that they had an absolute claim to the proprietorship of the Island, and read to them the Order by which the Governor for the time being was empowered to grant or sell land to whomsoever he pleased.

Reports by Commissioners appointed by the Governor of New South Wales to inquire into difficulties attaching to land tenure at Norfolk Island will be found in New South Wales Parliamentary Paper (Confidential) No. 78911 of 1906.

Mr. Edwards is in error when he states that the Commonwealth Government evicted the Islanders from the old convict houses. Information on this subject will be found on pages 28 and 40 of the Parliamentary Paper referred to in the preceding paragraph, from which it will be seen that the ownership of the convict buildings and the conditions of occupancy were decided by the Governor of New South Wales long before the Island was taken over by the Commonwealth.

The terms upon which the Government Medical Officer of Norfolk Island was appointed were fixed by the Government of New South Wales. The original arrangement was that the Doctor should

The Hon. W. F. Dunn, M.L.A.,
Minister for Agriculture,
SYDNEY.

/receive

receive a stipend of £200 per annum, with the right of private practice, and that each Pitcairn family should be entitled to medical attention for a fee of 15/- per annum. It was subsequently ascertained that the Doctor in his private capacity was experiencing the greatest difficulty in securing payment of fees from the Pitcairn families and it was accordingly decided that the fees should be collected and retained by the Government and that the salary of the Doctor should be increased to such an amount as to recompense him for the loss of private practice.

As far as can be ascertained from the records in the possession of this Department, it was never intended that the residents of Norfolk Island should be provided with medical attention free of charge.

The import duties were originally imposed by the New South Wales Government and have not been altered by the Commonwealth.

The whole tariff consists of 19 items only, 5 of which are intoxicating liquors which can only be imported by the Administration. The total revenue last financial year from tariff collections was £695.

In this connection I may add, for your information, that the Commonwealth Government has found it necessary to subsidise the Territory of Norfolk Island to the extent of £3500 per annum to enable the cost of administration to be met.

A telephone was erected between Kingston and the Cascade landing place by the Commonwealth Administration to enable information to be given to approaching ships of the state of the weather in order that they might decide at which part of the Island to anchor. Prior to the installation of the telephone it was necessary for this information to be supplied by a horseman who was required to journey from one end of the Island to the other. The greater part of the material for the erection of the telephone, viz:- the wires, insulators, instruments etc., was supplied to the Administration by the Postmaster-General's Department at a very low cost, and, as the laying of the line was performed by the community as a portion of the general public work, very little expenditure was incurred by the local Administration.

The installation of the telephone has been the means of saving considerable time and labour to the shippers of produce from the Island, by enabling them to secure early advice as to the part of the Island at which their exports should be concentrated for shipment.

It is considered that if the erection of the telephone had entailed a much larger expenditure than that actually incurred it would have been amply justified.

As you are doubtless aware, there are no harbours with wharves at Norfolk Island where vessels may tie up for the discharge and loading of cargo and passengers, and the position at which the vessel will anchor is regulated entirely by the state of the weather.

It will be apparent from the foregoing that Mr. Edwards has not been accurately informed upon the matters to which he makes reference.

I return herewith the letter addressed to you by Mr. Edwards.

Yours faithfully,

Edw. G. McLAREN
Secretary.



Department of Agriculture.



New South Wales. SYDNEY

27th August, 1925.

Dear Sir,

29 AUG 1925 A.M.

I present herewith a communication which I have received from Mr. Frank Edwards of Slapdash, GULGONG, NEW SOUTH WALES.

I would appreciate the favor of advice with regard to the matters referred to in this connection.

Yours faithfully,

Minister for Agriculture.

The Under Secretary
Home & Territories Dept.,
MELBOURNE.

Copy.

Slapdash Station,
GULGONG.

Dear Mr. Dunn,

First of all my wife and I wish to congratulate you on getting into Parliament. Mr. Dewar and friends wish to be remembered to you. I spoke to you when you were last in Gulgong concerning the deeds and papers of Norfolk Island. I have left it rather a long while but only got particulars last boat. It was Frederick Young, a Pitcairn Islander acting as Administrator that gave the papers up to Governor Denison he promising to return them but they have never seen them from that day to this. Sometime after the papers were given up the Island was taken over by the Commonwealth Government. Now if the Islanders that have no land want any they have to pay for it. The land being in leased blocks. The free grant was stopped and there are a good few that have not the money to pay. After the Commonwealth Government took it over they sent word that the people were to be turned out of the old convict houses. The Governor Capt. Drake refused to do it and advised the people to pull them down. They gave him notice and put Elliot in his place, then they were turned into the road and if they wanted to go back were made to pay rent. Also the Doctor that they were to have free had to be paid 15/- per year each family. All goods now such as sugar, tobacco, confectionery and silks have to have duty paid on them. I mentioned to you they were trying to tax them but I haven't heard any more about it. Such ridiculous things as telephones on a place like that are being put up now which is likely to bring tax on to them to pay for it. I think this is all the information I can give you, if you can possibly do anything in the matter we will be very grateful I can assure you, for I feel sure they will have no land left if they are not careful.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) FRANK EDWARDS.

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Slapdash Station,
GULGONG.

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