

The first charge in Mr. Lndon's petition, as summarized in the report of the Select Committee, was then read :—

"The petitioner states that, in 1874, 300 duly attested claims by persons entitled to vote at the election of a member to represent the district in the House were lodged with the Returning Officer within the time prescribed by law. That petitioner's brother, Mr. P. Lndon, was the attesting witness to 156 of the said claims. That Mr. Williams, the Returning Officer of the district, objected to and disallowed 155 of the claims so attested by Mr. Lndon."

Mr. Lndon, in support of this charge, produced a copy of the list of names of persons who, in the year 1874, had lodged their claims to be placed upon the electoral roll with Mr. Williams, as Registration Officer of the district. He said that the list would show that upwards of 300 claims had been thus lodged; that 141 of them had been attested by his brother, Patrick Lndon; and that of the number so attested the Registration Officer had objected to 140. Mr. Lndon then admitted that in his petition he should not have charged Mr. Williams with having "disallowed" these claims, stating that he knew it was not in the power of the Registration Officer to do so under the law, and he knew that it was competent to the Revising Officer only to "disallow" claims to vote, and that he was aware that the whole of the claims, as shown in the list he had produced, had fallen through from the fact that no Court of Revision had been held in the district in that year.

Mr. Lndon had no witnesses to bring forward for examination, and nothing further to advance.

Mr. Williams, on being asked to reply, said that he had been charged by Mr. Lndon with having contravened the law by "disallowing" the claims in question, but now he had withdrawn that charge, admitting that it should not have been made, there was nothing left for him to reply to. Mr. Williams further said that, as Registration Officer, he had in the discharge of his duties notified his intention to object to many claims, and amongst them to a large number bearing the signature of P. Lndon as attesting witness; that he would have been prepared to uphold his objections in the Court of Revision at the proper time, but the Revising Officer did not hold a Court in the Bay of Islands District in the year 1874, and the consequence followed that the whole of the claims which had been lodged with him fell through.

Mr. Williams handed into Court a copy of a letter addressed to him by the Revising Officer, dated June, 1874, explaining the circumstances under which he had been unable to attend at Russell for the purpose of holding his Court on the day appointed (this copy is marked A, and appended).

This closed the inquiry into the first charge.

The second charge, as summarized in the report of the Select Committee, was then read :—

"That, in 1875, the said Returning Officer objected to the claims of persons claiming to be entitled to vote as aforesaid after the expiration of the time allowed by law for making such objection."

Mr. Lndon would not do so in as many words, but virtually withdrew this charge altogether. He said that he had been misled upon the subject, and that it was only within the last few days he had been made aware of the limit of time allowed by law for the Registration Officer to make objections to claims.

Mr. Lndon had nothing further to say, and there was nothing for Mr. Williams to reply to.

The third charge appears in Mr. Lndon's petition in the following words :—

"That, at the instigation and on the recommendation of the said Returning Officer, some of the polling places within the said electoral district were appointed at places in the vicinity whereof there were not twenty electors, as required by law.

"That, through such recommendation, a very large number of electors were virtually disfranchised by reason of the gross inconvenience of the said polling places to electors desirous of recording their votes."

Mr. Lndon said at the last general election there was a new polling place gazetted at Haruru, in the vicinity of three other polling places—Russell, Kawakawa, and Waimate, all easy of access. There are only eight electors on the roll at Haruru, and only six votes were recorded there at the last election.

Mr. Lndon then cited another instance of what he said he considered a misplaced polling station, by the substitution of the mill at Whangaroa for that which had been formerly at Kaeo.

Mr. Lndon said: I consider Whangape and Parengarenga should each have polling stations; that the electors in those places are virtually disfranchised for want of them, having to travel forty miles from the former place to Herd's Point, and seventy from Parengarenga to Kaitaia, to record their votes. I do not know how many electors there are at the places I have named, but there are more at Parengarenga than at Haruru.

Mr. Lndon had not any witnesses to bring forward for examination.

Mr. Williams handed into Court copies of a circular letter received by him from the Under Colonial Secretary, dated 25th August, 1873, and of his reply thereto, relating to the subject of polling places generally (this correspondence is marked B, and appended), in which is explained the circumstances under which Haruru was recommended by him to be gazetted as a polling station.

Mr. Williams said: I had nothing to do with the removal of the polling station from Kaeo to the mill at Whangaroa. That was done in Wellington. The sitting member for the district recommended that the latter place should be appointed as a polling station; and when that was being done, it was, I believe under mistake that the polling station which had been formerly at Kaeo was at the same time abolished.

This closed the inquiry into the third charge; and with reference to Mr. Lndon's opinion that Whangape and Parengarenga should be appointed to be polling stations, I would observe that upon reference to the electoral roll for the district at present in force, I find the number on the roll for the first-named place to be four, and for Parengarenga five, only.

The fourth charge in Mr. Lndon's petition can only be considered as included in the first charge; it has reference to four of the three hundred claims there mentioned. These four had been attested by Mr. John Lndon himself, and the Registration Officer had challenged one of them, and Mr. Lndon suggested that he should have objected to the whole or none.