

123. You said that you had no official knowledge of the complaints made with regard to the general election. Was this prior to the licensing election, or was it later on?—I think it was soon after the general election.

124. It was prior to this election?—Yes, it would be prior. I am merely speaking from seeing some Wairarapa papers.

125. Did you refer to the Minister that there was newspaper comment and outside comment upon the conduct of the general election?—I might have mentioned the matter casually. I had nothing official before me.

126. *Mr. Field.*] Mr. Pollen, I suppose you could produce to this Committee any correspondence that has taken place between your department and anybody else bearing in any way upon the conduct of these two elections?—Yes, if there is any.

127. *The Chairman.*] Are you in the habit of acting on personal complaints connected with any department of the public service that your department is administering?—Hardly ever, in fact we would not act upon a personal verbal complaint.

128. In the event of any person making a verbal statement you would call upon that person to formulate his complaint in writing?—That is the usual practice.

129. Have any complaints been formulated in writing, and reached your department, complaining of Mr. Armstrong?—I do not think there are any, except those we had just now from Mr. Phillips.

130. *Mr. Fraser.*] Is it not usual when an officer is complained of to take notice of it? Were they (the complaints) forwarded to Mr. Armstrong?—Mr. Armstrong had asked for them.

131. They were so general that you did not consider them worth while to send to him?—They were too general.

132. *Mr. Phillips.*] You are aware then, Mr. Pollen, that complaints were made on the general election?—Those complaints referred to, yes.

133. You are also aware that the Licensing Committee has also been upset, and there is no Licensing Committee in the Wairarapa District at all now, that the Resident Magistrate is acting?—Yes.

134. How does it come then, after all this, Mr. Armstrong was appointed Land Valuer?—That is not in my department.

135. *Mr. Chairman.*] Mr. Pollen, would you be good enough to furnish the Committee with a list of the Returning Officers and the days appointed by them to receive nominations?—Yes. [List put in, Exhibit No. 24.]

Mr. ARMSTRONG, further examined.

136. *Mr. Fraser.*] Mr. Armstrong, will you tell the Committee by what process of reasoning you fixed on the 25th?—I took the 74th clause where it says, "On receipt of the writ, the Returning Officer shall forthwith give at least ten days' public notice in the form as is set forth in the eleventh schedule." The writs were issued on 20th November, and I got mine the same night. I fixed the time to fit in with postal arrangements, and I gave fourteen days' notice. On Saturday, the advertisement stating that the nominations would close the following Wednesday appeared in the *Wairarapa Observer* and the *Wairarapa Star* of Saturday. It appeared in the *Wairarapa Standard* on Monday and in the *Star* every day till Wednesday and *Observer* on Monday.

137. Before you put your advertisement in, you must have figured out in conformity with a certain insertion. How could you arrive at the 25th?—It did not mean to say, "If circumstances did not permit you to close the poll before the seventh day," the section says, "Not later."

138. You thought you might have done it on the Monday?—No; I thought I should have to give fair and reasonable notice.

139. According to your reading of the Act, the Tuesday would have suited as well. Do you think you had ample discretion under the Act to fix any day you pleased?—I considered I was bound by the Act to fix as late a day as I could to suit my getting my election materials away by mail.

140. At the time when you were fixing the day, did you have the Act before you? What did you take into consideration when fixing that day?—I took into consideration that I gave at least ten days' notice.

141. Ten days' notice of what?—Of the poll.

142. How many days of nomination?—It does not say.

143. You thought that that was not necessary?—I gave five days' notice of the nomination, and thought that was sufficient.

144. You thought that in the Act the words, "seven days" did not bind you to seven days?—Decidedly; I did not think it bound me to the seven days.

145. Have you ever acted as Returning Officer before?—No.

146. You had no instructions?—Not beyond the Act.

147. It is a most extraordinary thing for you to go inside the seven days if you read the Act to mean you had scope to go as far as you liked?—I did not read the Act to mean I could go as far as I liked.

148. *Mr. Field.*] Did you close this nomination at the time you did on your own responsibility, and solely at your instance?—Certainly.

149. You had no communication, and did not act on the suggestion of anyone else?—No.

150. I should like you to say what was your reason for making an exception in the case of the Wairarapa, in closing the nominations on Wednesday instead of the Friday?—It was this way: I got the writs on Friday night; I had no other advertisements, I had seen none, and I just fixed the nominations to suit the convenience of myself and the district.

151. How long before the nominations closed did your advertisements appear fixing the date of the closing of the nominations?—On the Saturday previous.

152. That was Saturday to Wednesday?—Yes.

153. The Wairarapa is a large district, Mr. Armstrong?—Yes.